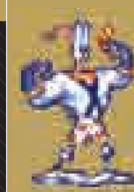
OLD!

BREATHING NEW LIFE INTO CLASSIC GAMES

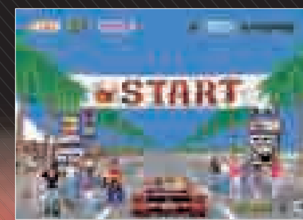
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A KNIGHT'S TALE

DAVID JONES ON HOW HIS MAGIC KNIGHT GAMES RULED THE BUDGET WORLD

LUCASARTS

FROM RESCUING REBELS TO SWASHBUCKLING PIRATES

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BARGAIN HUNT
CHECK OUT OUR EXHAUSTIVE LIST OF THE VINTAGE HARDWARE YOU SHOULD OWN

HARD DRIVIN'
A CONVERSION CAPER THAT DOESN'T HAVE A HAPPY ENDING

ACTRAISER
ONE OF THE BEST SNES GAMES YOU MAY NEVER HAVE PLAYED

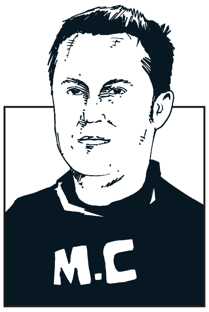
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THE RETROBATES

FAVOURITE GAME ENDING



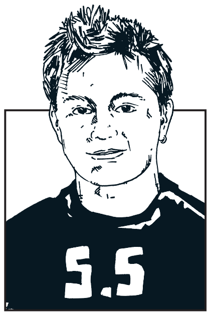
MARTYN CARROLL

For me it's the very agreeable conclusion to *Double Dragon*, when brotherly love goes right out the window and the boys start scrapping over the girl. It was wrong but felt so right.
Expertise: Writing freelance while at work
Currently playing:
The PS3 waiting game
Favourite game of all time:
Jet Set Willy



ASHLEY DAY

Maniac Mansion featured several different endings, the best of which had to be when the player unexpectedly blew up the entire house by pressing a seemingly innocent button.
"Game Over" indeed.
Expertise: Trying (and failing) not to buy any more DS games
Currently playing:
Forbidden Forest
Favourite game of all time:
Shining Force III



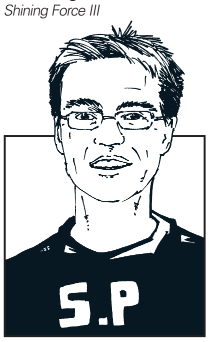
SPANNER

Double Dragon! Pitting brother against brother in unarmed combat is the work of a sadistic genius. All the other answers below and to my left are wrong. WRONG! (Except Martyn's)
Expertise:
Double Dragon
Currently playing:
Double Dragon
Favourite game of all time:
Double Dragon



JOHN SZCZEPANIAK

Metal Gear Solid: The ending is action-packed with plenty of dialogue and some mind-blowing plot revelations. It also has the most beautiful Irish singing, courtesy of Aoife Ni Fhearraigh, that I've ever heard!
Expertise: Japanese games
Currently playing:
Chikyuu Boueigun 2
Favourite game of all time:
Cave Story



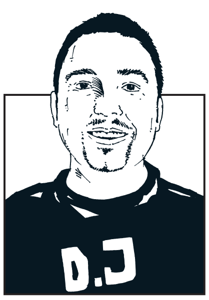
SIMON PHILLIPS

I'll never forget the ending of *The Legend of Zelda: The Ocarina of Time*, mainly because it ripped off *Return of the Jedi*'s. All that was missing was a bunch of Ewoks using Stormtrooper helmets as an impromptu drum set…
Expertise: BBQs
Currently playing:
Metroid Prime: Hunters
Favourite game of all time:
Head Over Heels



MIKE TOOLEY

Silent Hill and its multiple endings. My favourite being Maria's. James gets to leave Silent Hill but just as the cutscene is about to close Maria coughs, hinting at the same illness that took his wife and implying it will start again somewhere else.
Expertise: Games that few have heard of and less have played
Currently playing:
Batman Returns (Mega CD)
Favourite game of all time:
Mr Do!



DARRAN JONES

Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night. You get to the end of the game, only to find out that you're only halfway through the whole adventure. Excellent stuff, especially as I never wanted the game to end in the first place.
Expertise: You're reading it
Currently playing:
Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney
Favourite game of all time:
Robotron: 2084



CRAIG GRANNELL

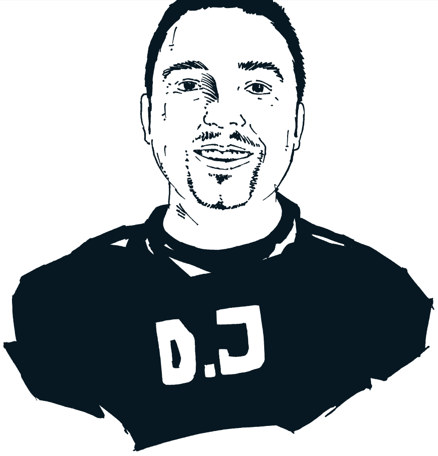
Forbidden Forest's explosive finale, purely due to the satisfaction gained from finally shooting the Demogorgon between the eyes at the umpteenth attempt.
Expertise: Games whose controllers don't require you to have 37 fingers
Currently playing:
Loads of DS stuff
Favourite game of all time:
H.E.R.O.



PAUL DRURY

Scott Adam's *Adventureland*. I spent decades struggling to work it out and when I finally did, all I got was ***Adventure Over***. Kind of a metaphor for life.
Expertise:
Getting old programmers to confess their drug habits
Currently playing:
Gyruss
Favourite game of all time:
Sheep In Space

LOADING...



Eagle-eyed readers will have noticed that last month's *Sonic* feature covered a staggering eight pages and that the Retroinspection on Atari's Jaguar was two pages longer than normal.

The reason for these changes? Simple, you requested them.

After numerous demands we've decided to have a jiggle around with the magazine's format and will be extending the odd article here and there. That's not to say we're going to return to the huge features of old, but we will be giving extra space to those games/machines/companies that truly deserve it.

This month alone we have the first of a two-part feature on LucasArts beginning on page 32, while Sega's Mega Drive receives a comprehensive six pages on page 48. Then there's a look behind the CDi's *Zelda* titles – and no, they're nowhere near as bad as you might think – on page 52.

Due to deadlines we can't always respond to feedback as quickly as we'd like to, but we do aim to please. After all, Retro Gamer is as much yours as it is ours and together we'll continue to create a bigger and better magazine with every new issue.

Enjoy the magazine.







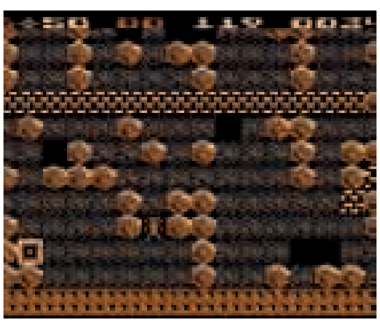
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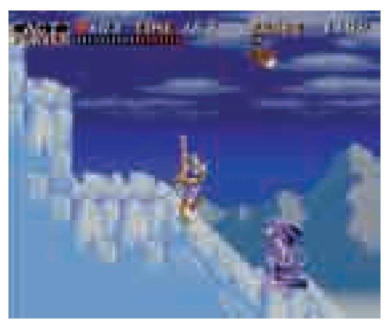
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If it's a bumper compilation or a great new remake, then Retro Rated is where you'll find it

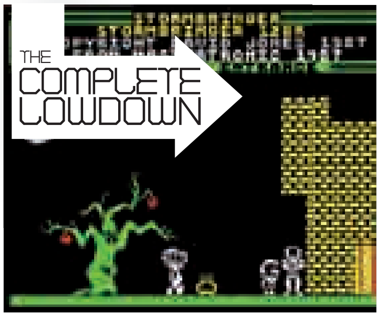


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p110







EASTERN PROMISE

MAGIC KNIGHT

CONVERSION CAPERS

RETRO SCENE

THE GUIDE

What's hot this issue…





» Above: The arcades on Welsh campsites were never like this… Right: More games you never saw down the chippy

THE BEST ARCADE IN THE WORLD

WHEN THE CREAM OF UK ARCADE PLAYERS HEADED ACROSS THE POND TO COMPETE AGAINST THEIR US RIVALS, RETRO GAMER SENT PAUL DRURY ALONG TO REPORT ON WHERE YOU SHOULD BE TAKING NEXT YEAR'S SUMMER HOLIDAY.

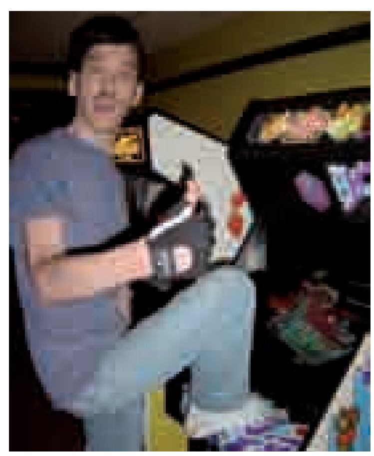
As you ascend the stairs to the top floor of Funspot Arcade, you half expect St Peter to be handing out quarters, because this is truly Retro Heaven. Rows of mint cabinets stretch out before you – *Red Baron* cockpit, Atari *Drag Race*, the shimmering *Star Castle*, a full-motion *Space Harrier*… every turn brings a fresh jaw-dropping discovery. You simply never want to leave.

"That's pretty much what happened to me," smiles manager Gary Vincent. "I took a summer job here in 1981, supposedly for four weeks, and I just stayed. And the place is pretty much how it was back then. We took *Double Dragon* as a cut-off point and the games, the posters, the décor, even the music we play is all pre-1987."

Such sweet music. *Pac-Man*'s familiar wakka-wakka; the timeless hollow blip from *Pong Doubles*; the obscure *Stratavox*, like the bastard offspring of Kylie and a Dalek with its chant of 'lucky, lucky, lucky'; and then a new sound punctuates the digital symphony…

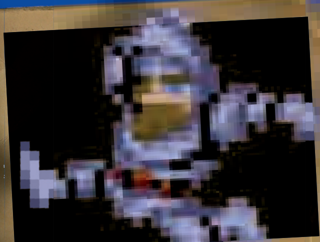
"You motherf*cker," screams Greg Bond, slapping a *Centipede* machine hard across the face. Greg has the *Mappy* and *Make Trax* records and Tony Soprano's disquieting mix of charm and menace. "I'm kind of a perfectionist and get a little angry when I fail. I've been kicked out of arcades for beating up on a game a little too much, you know what I'm saying…?"

As I envision Greg leaving the severed head of a *Sunset Riders* cab in a rival players bed, I spy the equally unsettling image of Kentuckian Mark Alpiger ceremoniously donning a single black glove, OJ Simpson-style, before treating me to a virtuoso performance on *Crystal Castles*. A veteran of the Videogame Masters Tournaments in the Eighties, he praises the role of the Internet in ushering in a second Golden Age. "It restarted Twin Galaxies, it let people rediscover the classics through MAME and it helped these tournaments come back. We should all bow down and worship the Internet for what it's done for videogames. And porn. Now, do you guys want to see me play this with my feet?"



» Mark 'the sock' Alpiger puts his foot down

HERO OF THE MONTH



SIR ARTHUR

Every month, Retro Gamer looks back at a classic videogame hero. This month it's the turn of Capcom's ghoul basher Sir Arthur

First appearance: *Ghosts 'N' Goblins*

Distinguishing features: Suit of armour

Weapon of choice: Lance

Most likely to: Run around in his keks at the first sign of danger

Least likely to: Appear in a N64 remake

Unusual fact: The Japanese name is Makaimura, which roughly translates as Demon World Village

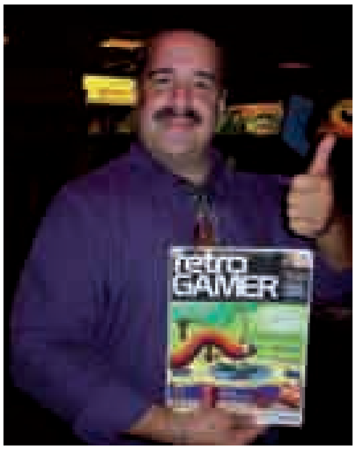
LOADING SCREEN OF THE MONTH

NO 9:
IT CAME FROM THE DESERT

Some loading screens set up anticipation for the main event perfectly and *It Came From The Desert* featured a corker. Drenched in ominous colours and featuring a huge imposing "It" on a stark desert landscape Cinemaware's title captured the B-movie style perfectly.



JUST IN TREAT YOURSELF TO A FANTASTIC MEGA DRIVE PLUG 'N PLAY PACK FOR THE AMAZINGLY LOW PRICE OF £6. HEAD ON OVER TO PAGE 31 FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS GREAT OFFER



» A new *Drag Race* record and an appearance in Retro Gamer. A result for Todd Rogers

Twinkle-toed Mark isn't the only one showboating here. On the way to setting a new *Burgertime* high, Brian Wagner from Pennsylvania accumulates so many extra lives, he finds a half-hour window to simultaneously break the record on *Rolling Thunder*.

"I'M AIMING TO PLAY STAR WARS FOR 100 HOURS. I'LL PLAY TILL I COLLAPSE" ROBERT MRUCZEK

Then there's Brooklyn-ite Robert Mruczek, who does a convincing Norris McWhirter to our Roy Castle, as he reels off the top scores on any game we can think of. A senior Twin Galaxies referee, Robert has set his sights on the Holy Grail of playing a single credit for 100 hours straight. He has a disturbingly thorough knowledge of how to best handle human waste and avoid hallucinating during such a marathon game.

"I've been forcing myself to play games for days on end. I know I can stay conscious for over 80 hours now and next time I play *Star Wars*, I'll play it till I collapse," he states, dispassionately.

Compared to Robert's determined nihilism, spending 13-hours breaking the seven million mark on *Tron* might seem like child's play. David Cruz from Florida takes that literally and has his ten-year-old son Kevin by his side throughout, the lad loyally guarding the machine whenever daddy makes a dash for the bathroom.

Robert Griffen is also doing it for the kids. He spends eight hours scoring over 13 million on the notoriously difficult (and super rare) *Joust 2: Survival Of The Fittest*, demolishing the old high of 2.6m. "I wanted to show my little boy that whatever you set your mind to – my thing just happens to be videogames – if you put enough time, effort and practice in, you can be the best. Whatever he chooses in life, I want him to remember that if his dad can do it, so can he."

Robert phones six-year-old Kal-el back in Washington to say he's put his son's initials at the top of the High Score table and lip quivering, says, "I love you too, son". I wipe away the tears and wonder if it's all down to practice. I resolve to test the theory and begin a concerted effort to reach the concluding stage of *Gyruss* – Earth – a feat that eluded me as a kid.

Three hours later I'm clearly improving but struggle with the dizzying speed of the aliens in the final approach. I'm in need of guidance, when a dishevelled chap resembling Emo Philips' granddad ambles over and instead of trying to sell me a copy of The Big Issue, gives me a masterclass. It's Richard Marsh from Conneticut, *Gyruss* champ and *Tempest* wizard. "I like the perspective of those games," he mumbles. "I like being on the outside, looking in. I suppose I feel like that sometimes…"

We share a poignant silence. Maybe being obsessive about old videogames won't win you friends and influence people in the rat race, but here, in this retro temple, everyone's family. Our band of Brits are made massively welcome and are even presented with commemorative bottles of Billy Mitchell's Hot Sauce bearing our gurning faces by the ebullient Walter Day. We're genuinely touched and profoundly uncomfortable.

We kept the British end up, mind. Mancunian Gary Whelan set a new World Record of over half a million on *Galaxian* and Greg Mott from Poole chalked up a new high on *Buster Bros*. Tony 'TT' Temple, whilst scoring well over a million numerous times on *Missile Command*, didn't increase his Tournament record of 1.9m, but then his battles were off-screen – former champ Roy 'Mr Awesome' Shildt pushed his psychosis to new levels by sending a hapless private investigator to trail Tony and then bombarded our lodgings with phone calls demanding he be given the cabin next to his nemesis. In the States, you're no one if you haven't got a stalker…

And me? Well, I finally made it to Earth on *Gyruss*.

Now I'm just planning how I can get back to Heaven next year…

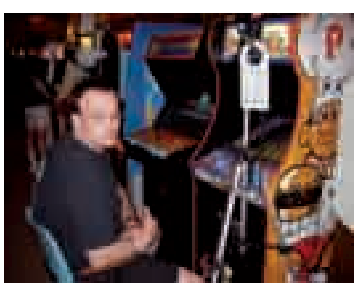
Go to www.youtube.com and search for 'Funspot' to see TT's walkthrough of the arcade and while you're there, tap in 'Roy *Missile Command*' for some comedy gold.

INTRUDER ALERT

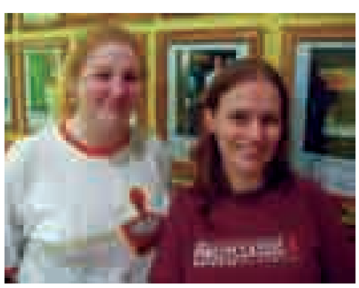
Located in Weirs Beach, New Hampshire, USA, Funspot has more than five hundred cabinets spread across its three floors. The arcade was founded by the Lawton brothers in 1952 – the surviving brother John still opens up everyday – and amongst the superlative collection of videogames (the vast majority having arrived as new on their release) you find charming reminders of the place's history – mechanical 'Love Testers', pinball tables from the Fifties and a quaint indoor miniature golf course.

The first week in June sees the annual Classic Gaming Tournament. Now in its eighth year, the title went to 26-year-old Bostonian Mike San Pedro. Hang on, wasn't he still in nappies when these games came out? "My parents were very supportive," he explains. "When I was three, they'd stand me on a milk crate so I could reach the joystick."

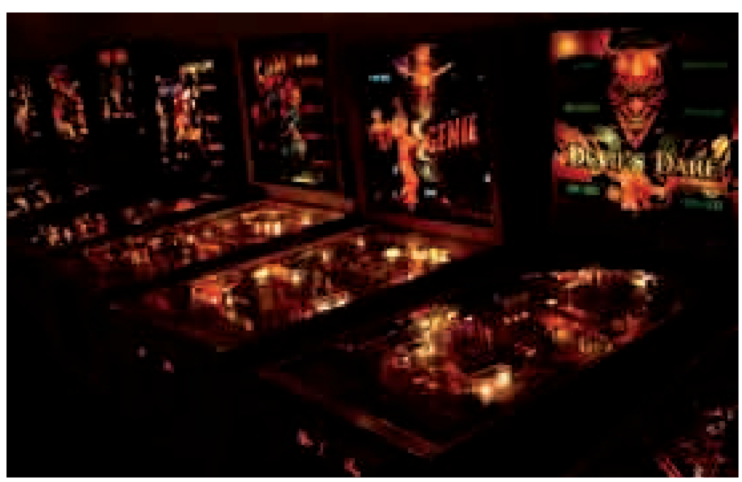
Mr and Mrs San Pedro, your boy done good.



» Brian Wagner setting two world records simultaneously, the big show-off…



» More Funspot rarities – girls. Jen 'Hard Drivin' Moore and Anna 'Wonderboy' Cram



» The dark art of flipper and ball…



AMERICA FREE RETRO★

YOUR U.S. TAKE ON THE RETRO SCENE WITH RETRO GAMING RADIO'S SHANE R MONROE



CLASSIC GAMING = CASUAL GAMING?

You've seen it on television; you've read about it in the newspaper – chances are you know someone that's doing it. I'm talking, of course, about casual gaming.

You would think with the media blitz promoting "brain games" and "twitch" gaming on portable gaming systems that this is the latest, greatest trend in gaming. Nintendo has almost single-handedly brought twitch gaming back into the mainstream with its bestsellers consisting of "touch generation" games.

Yes sir – no doubt about it, the wave of casual gaming is coming – and it's a tsunami. The most played game on the Xbox 360 appears to be nothing more than a physics-particle juiced-up arcade-style shoot-'em-up game. *Lumines* still appears to be one of the most popular games on the PSP. And the forthcoming Wii console promises to put gaming into the hands of everyone by simplifying controls and making gaming that is "gasp" actually fun.

They say that everything runs in 20-year cycles – clothing, music, movies and apparently videogaming. Damn, almost feels like 1985 again, doesn't it?

I've been waiting patiently for gaming to get back to its roots. Why? Isn't progress what we all want? Don't we all want fully simulated 3D environments, 500 hours of gameplay, online play with 30,000 people in real time and ragdoll physics? Isn't that progress? Yeah, if you're 30-years-old with no job, no family and still live in your mother's basement…

I mean, who else has the time to play these modern games? The time and drive to learn 16 button combinations and 18 hours a day to get good enough to play games online? Scream 'match-making' all you want. Sometimes it works – sometimes it doesn't.

Fact is – life is moving faster and faster every day. More to see, more to do. More responsibility. Most of us carry a full time job, a family with 2.5 children, a fat mortgage to pay, some sort of online responsibilities (blogging takes so much work you know), plus we have 500 channels on TV to watch and ten million pages on the Internet to surf. When the hell do we have time to play games?

I'll tell you when. Sitting on the crapper. Waiting for the bus or subway. During your coffee break at work. The fifteen minutes you have while you wait to pick your kid up from soccer practice. How much *God Of War* can you really throw down in 15 minutes while you wait for the movie to start?

We need games that fit into our busy lives – and "casual gaming" is it. Don't be fooled; this isn't just for "non-gamers". It's for gamers that have real lives… for those that don't have time to sit in front of the tube for eight hours at a time playing PS2.

You and I know what casual gaming really is. It's classic gaming. Sure, like everything else, they've slapped a new hip label on it and tried to make it cool. But let's not lie to ourselves. The principles of casual gaming are really classic gaming. Anyone can play *Pac-Man*, even your mom. Can mom play *Ghost Recon*? Um, no. Throw *Pac-Pix* at your younger sister that never understood why you played games all the time. Anyone can draw *Pac-Man*. How long did a classic arcade game like *Robotron* last? 3 minutes? If you were really good – maybe 15 minutes. Gee, sounds like a prime candidate for "casual gaming"; and what a surprise – it's on Xbox Live. Are Brain Games – really stimulating your mind? Who cares – it's a great way to kill 15 minutes a day on your commute to work. *Nintendogs* – do you really feel like you're petting a real dog? Doesn't matter – it's a great way to kill an hour a day when you need some time filler. As a bonus, you don't even have to save your game – just close the game and it goes





SHANE R MONROE IS THE PROUD OWNER OF POPULAR INTERNET RADIO SHOW, RETRO GAMING RADIO. HEAD ON OVER TO HTTP://WWW.RETROGAMINGRADIO.COM IF YOU WANT TO CATCH HIS LATEST SHOW

to sleep – ready to serve you the next time you have ten minutes free. *Tetris* – new and revolutionary? God no… but when you can take it with you and play over a Big Mac at McDonalds kicking butt online and taking names, it brings a whole new life to the game.

The point is, every time technology takes a side-step (or a step back) like from arcade to console or console to handheld, developers have new restrictive hardware to use and they have to struggle to make the best of it. Their hard work is our gain. As a bonus, they roll back a couple of generations of gaming and bring the classics back to us. *Puzzloop* on your DS, *Lemmings* on your PSP, *Zuma* on your MDA – heck, I've seen the equivalent to *Mattel Electronic Football* going for $1 at a local thrift store.

Suits me just fine; I'll take my *New Super Mario Bros* on the Nintendo DS, *Konami Arcade Advance* on my GBA and *Robotron* via MAME on my GP2x. My kinda gaming – my kinda time frame. Classic gaming is alive and well my friends and thanks to casual gaming it's likely to be around a lot longer.

Keep it retro!
Shane

SEGA AND TAITO GO PORTABLE

SEGA AND XPLOSIV REVEAL NEW PSP COMPILATIONS

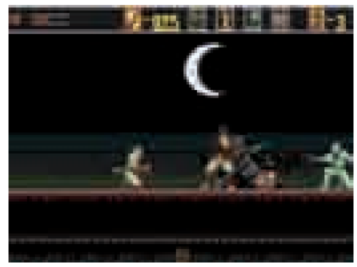
There's certainly a lot of compilation love heading for the PSP this year. *Capcom Classics Collection Remixed* and *Reloaded* and *Capcom Puzzle World* should all be available by the end of the year, while packs from Namco, Midway and System 3 are already in the shops, and now it would appear that Xplosiv and Sega is joining the fray.

The Mega Drive Collection will be available from Sega by the end of the year and is already sounding like an essential purchase. Over 30 games will be available – three of which you will need to unlock – on the compilation and will include classic hits such as *Revenge Of Shinobi*, *Golden Axe 1*, *2* and *3*, *Phantasy Star*, *Ecco The Dolphin* and *Sonic The Hedgehog*. Sega are also promising that the ports themselves will be perfect, which will come as a huge relief to anyone who was unfortunate enough to buy the Mega Drive packs that were available for the Dreamcast and GBA. *The Mega Drive Collection* is set for a November release and will also be available on the PS2.

The second compilation we're looking forward to is *Taito Legends Power-Up* and despite a few expected classics missing, it's still looking very promising. While *Bubble Bobble*, *Rainbow Islands*, *Phoenix* and *Zoo Keeper* won't be included, *Elevator Action*, *Rastan*, *Space Invaders*, *The New Zealand Story* and *Cameltry* are just a few of the 21 games that have all made the cut. Interestingly, *Taito Legends Power-Up* will also include four 'enhanced' updates with superior gameplay and graphic enhancements. No doubt we can expect a sequel featuring the remaining titles missing from the two *Taito Legends* packs some time next year…



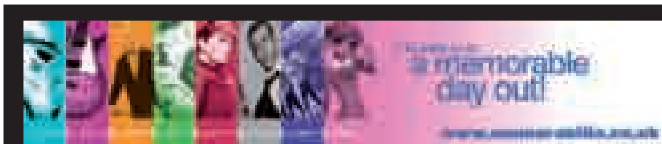
» Not long, and you'll be able to slash things up on the move. Lovely



» The classic *Revenge Of Shinobi* has been confirmed, but will *Shinobi III* make the cut?



» All three *Golden Axe* games will be making the compilation, although the first is arguably the best



NEW RETRO EVENTS TO LOOK FORWARD TO

GAME ON

If you read last month's Retroinspection and felt like you wanted to get to know Atari's Jaguar a little better, then why not head off to this year's JagFest event?

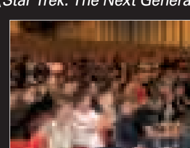
Due to take place on the 28 and 29 of October the event will be held at Rhinewood Country House Hotel in Glazebrook, which is just on the edge of Warrington. The Atari community are a friendly bunch and there will be plenty of machines to play on. Previous JagFests have featured plenty of rare peripherals and games that were never released, and this year's show will be no different. Expect an interview with the show's organiser, Graeme Hinchliffe.

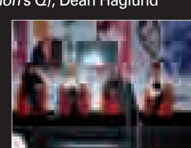
With three retro events in October – Retro Fusion is on 30 September and 01 October, while Eurocon runs from the 27 to 29 – gamers have a lot to look forward to. In the meantime though you may want to head off to this year's Memorabilia Show, and while it's not dedicated to retro gaming, it's sure to get the nostalgia juices flowing.

The original Memorabilia show was launched in 1994 and over the past 12 years it has built up a good reputation thanks to its celebrity guests, key location and its diverse range of different subjects. Everything from comics, anime, music and sci-fi is given ample coverage at the show and it now pulls in over 30,000 visitors a year.

This year's summer show will be held on the 12 and 13 of August. Verne Troyer (*Austin Powers'* Mini Me), John De Lancie (*Star Trek: The Next Generation*'s Q), Dean Haglund (*The X-Files*' Langly) and Leslie Grantham (*EastEnders*' Dirty Den) are all set to appear.

There are lots of competitions and activities, so check out www.memorabilia.co.uk for more info. Best of all, readers of Retro Gamer can take this copy of the magazine along to the show and receive a special discount. Lovely.





» Thousands flock the the NEC's Memorabilia show, make sure you make the trip as well

VILLAIN OF THE MONTH



DR ROBOTNIK

[VILLIAN OF THE MONTH]

Without a bad villain there would be no good heroes. What would Superman be without Lex Luthor? What would He-Man be without Skeletor? Rubbish, that's what. This month: Dr Robotnik

First Appearance:
Sonic The Hedgehog

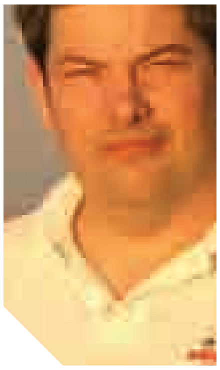
Distinguishing Features:
Crazy moustache

Weapon of Choice:
Numerous bizarre contraptions

Most likely to:
Own a Mean Bean Machine

Least likely to:
Rule the galaxy 'like father and son' with Sonic

Unusual fact: Dr Robotnik has an IQ of 300, although he still can't think of a decent plan to catch Sonic…





» An aspiring Top Gun about to do battle with the machine



» My mate Craig really does have one in his garage

"THERE I AM HANGING UPSIDE DOWN WITH CIDER AND CURRY ABOUT TO POUR OUT, WATCHING LOADS OF LITTLE BASTARDS RUNNING OFF WITH ALL MY 10P COINS" ARCHER MACLEAN

COMMENT

360 MOTION SICKNESS

MUSINGS FROM THE MIND OF MACLEAN

Not a lot of people know this, but way before the Xbox 360, there was another games machine sporting '360' in its name. However, this was not some lightweight console, but a really hardboiled and mean arcade machine, quite possibly the scariest arcade game of all time, if you're a wimp that is…

You see, it was called an R360 because its big round cockpit really did throw you all over the place in any direction, upside down, round about and everywhere in between, and perhaps a bit more than you'd expect. It cost about £50k back in 1991, weighed over a ton, and needed a large amount of floor space to work.

And it needed a barrier around it, with an attendant to stand by the Batman-style control station that went with it. I doubt many were made, but a few do survive and nutters with enough room space actually buy them up quite cheap and fix them for double garage use.

You climbed into the futuristic spherical cockpit and strapped yourself in. The mission was to shoot down enemy planes in a 3D flight sim game called *G-Loc*, which you can probably emulate on your wristwatch these days as the gameplay was pretty crap to be honest, but the machine's mechanicals were like something right out of *The Matrix*.

You can see a low res clip of one in action here: www.system16.com/files/media/360.mov. More info and explanations: www.system16.com/hardware.php?id=844. And some nut in America who's restored one to mint condition: www.keinert.com.

However, much as I know you're all going to run out and find one, I need to warn you about a rather unfortunate experience I had in one back in 1994 in the Trocadero, London.

You see, I was out with the lads from Psygnosis after a day promoting *Super Dropzone* on the SNES, and we had a curry and a few pints before hitting the arcade and playing 8-player *Daytona*. I even remember Dave Jones of *Lemmings* fame being in on this one.

My problem was that, despite having got tanked up, I still wanted a go. The operator assured me that if it all went horribly wrong all I had to do was hit this single "big red emergency stop button" in the cockpit. No problem then.

So, reassured, I climbed in and reached for the thrusters. Pretty soon I was swirling all over the place, chasing down some sprite-based plane on the screen in front of me. However, I started to feel really ill pretty quickly. So ill that any time soon I was going to end up blowing chunks all over the plane in front. Nice.

By now I wasn't sure which of the two or three red buttons to press, so I thumped the one I could feel expecting the machine to quickly right itself. But, oh no, this was a 'stop dead' emergency button, and sure enough I was upside down when it 'stopped dead'!

At this point the operator is supposed to quickly check you're okay, and hit a reset button on his controls to bring you the right way around. But the bastard was nowhere to be seen. He'd buggered off! So, there I am hanging upside down with cider and curry about to pour out, watching loads of little bastards running off with all the 10p coins dropping out my pocket. I don't know how long I was upside down, but it seemed like ages. Once some of my 'mates' had stopped laughing at me swearing away they figured out which big reset button to press and my pain was over a few seconds later.

I remember feeling really queasy for days after that. However, I would still go back in one any time. With enough space I would dearly love to own one too, and somehow hook its control signals up to a modern *Star Wars* game with a Xbox 360 running the show. That really would be awesome.

Just remember not to press that big red emergency button unless you're the right way up, and don't drink much. You have been warned…



» R360 in all its glory, and the right way up

eMag

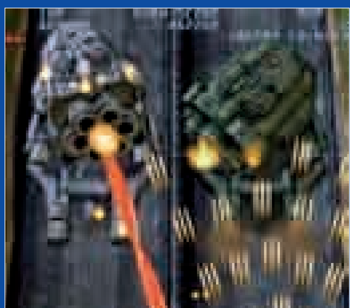
retro GAMER DIARY

EVENT HOSTING retro GAMER

IF YOU WANT RETRO GAMER TO PROMOTE UPCOMING GAMES AND EVENTS, CONTACT US AT RETROGAMER@IMAGINE-PUBLISHING.CO.UK

THINGS TO LOOK FORWARD TO...

Just because Retro Gamer looks to the past that doesn't mean that there aren't games and events to look forward to. Every month we'll be listing suitable games and events for you to add to your 'to do' list.



AUGUST '06

RAIDEN III

Released: 04 August

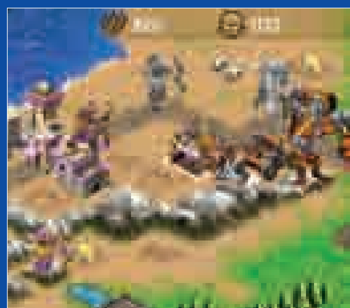
Publisher: 505 GameStreet

Price: £19.99

Format: PS2

Rightfully 'bigged' up in last month's Definitive *Raiden* feature, this is a superb return to form and one of the greatest vertical shooters currently available.

505 GameStreet's recent releases have been very good lately, so we're fully expecting the majority of the Japanese content to remain intact (including the 60HZ mode). If not we may have to stab someone with a fork…



AUGUST '06

AGE OF EMPIRES: THE AGE OF KINGS

Released: 11 August

Publisher: THQ

Price: £34.99

Format: DS

Considering the amazingly strong line-up of games that are currently available on the DS (*New Super Mario Bros* and *Nintendogs: Dalmatian & Friends* we're looking at you) it's little wonder that *Age Of Empires* has been pushed back. A shame really, as we've now got our hands on the US version and it really is very nice. Expect a full review next issue.



SEPTEMBER '06

CAPCOM CLASSICS RELOADED

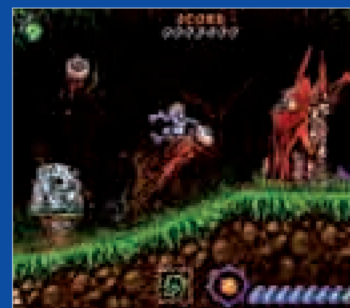
Released: September

Publisher: Capcom

Price: £34.99

Format: PSP

Capcom push ahead with its second PSP compilation (third if you count the US only Capcom *Puzzle World*) and like *Remix* it's looking mighty fine. Stalwart regulars such as *Ghouls 'N Ghosts*, *Commando* and Street Fighter 2 will be sharing UMD space with more unusual titles such as the wonderful *Eco Fighters* and *The King Of Dragons*. We can't wait.



SEPTEMBER '06

ULTIMATE GHOSTS 'N GOBLINS

Released: September

Publisher: Capcom

Price: £34.99

Format: PSP

It's a tad frustrating that *Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins* has been delayed until September, but judging by what we've played so far, it's definitely worth the wait. Like its recent *Megaman: Powered Up*, Capcom has taken the original game but added some stunning bells and whistles, most noticeably the glorious visuals and familiar music.



SEPTEMBER '06

POWER STONE

Released: September

Publisher: Capcom

Price: £34.99

Format: PSP

Another Capcom heavy month for the Retro Gamer Diary. With three new entries, on top of last month's four, Capcom is still Retro Gamer's pet developer. Fans of the Dreamcast games will be pleased to hear that Capcom has added plenty of tweaks to its classic franchise and an early play already confirms that it still has the magic that made the original Dreamcast games so much fun to play.



SEPTEMBER '06

TAITO LEGENDS PSP

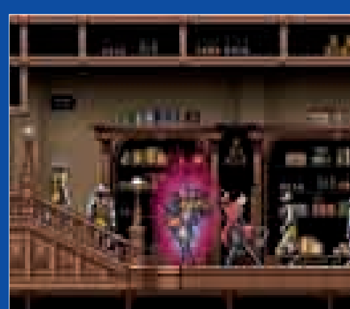
Released: September

Publisher: Xplosiv

Price: £34.99

Format: PSP

We've been moaning at Xplosiv to acquire the licence for this ever since the Japanese version was announced, and now it's finally confirmed the good news. Don't expect *Elevator Action Returns* in the palm of your hand though, as the majority of the games are from Taito's earlier years. Luckily, the four enhanced games that include *Cameltry*, *Balloon Bomber* and *Crazy Balloon* are set to be included.



OCTOBER '06

PORTRAIT OF RUIN

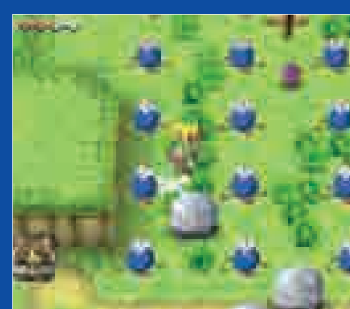
Released: 29 October

Publisher: Konami

Price: £29.99

Format: DS

Cleverly released in time for Halloween the next part of the *Castlevania* franchise is already looking mighty fine and looks set to continue the high standards that were first seen in *Castlevania: Dawn Of Sorrow*. With a brand new setting (World War II), two new characters and plenty of new foes to fight, *Castlevania: Portrait Of Ruin* is already looking like an essential purchase. Expect to see a review in a later issue.



NOVEMBER '06

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: PHANTOM HOURGLASS

Released: Q4 2006

Publisher: Nintendo

Price: £29.99

Format: DS

Oh lordy, it's a *Zelda* game for the DS and it looks the business. While *Phantom Hourglass* features a similar graphical style to *The Wind Waker*, it's set to make full use of the DS's unique abilities and will allow for competitive play against another DS owner. With everything from Link's movement to combat being controlled by the stylus this could well be the most unique *Zelda* yet.

eMag

BACK TO THE EIGHTIES

THE LATEST NEWS FROM DECEMBER 1987



The random month generator throws us haphazardly backwards in time and we find ourselves at December 1987. It was a time of software house affiliations and when 16-bit systems were everywhere… except for Atari who had run out of STs just before Christmas. Eggnog on the face anyone?



» *Nigel Mansell's Grand Prix* by Martech. Good game, good graphics, good gameplay, dodgy tash

Merry Christmas! It's December 1987 and the festive period is in full swing with software houses and computer manufacturers enjoying a seasonal boost to their coffers with many having trouble keeping up with supply.

EA, the US software giant, signed up smaller UK counterpart Martech as an affiliated label to its organisation. This would result in Martech having a much stronger promotional presence with EA pushing the label in Europe and the UK. The first of the new titles to come from the new Martech would be *Nigel Mansell's Grand Prix*.

In the past, Martech were responsible for other mediocre celebrity and sportsman related games such as *Eddie Kidd's Challenge*, *Geoff Capes Strongman* and *Sam Fox's Strip Poker*. It could have been so much worse however… Geoff Capes Strip Poker would have been terrifying…

Another American software house doing a deal with a UK counterpart was Activision who revealed it would be releasing several of its back catalogue titles on Mastertronic's Ricochet software label. Old classics such as *The Eidolon* and chart-topping *Ghostbusters* were among the first batch of titles set for release.

US Gold finally announced that the arcade conversion everyone had been waiting for was ready to hit the shops – *Out Run*. Although nobody expected the conversion to feature a hydraulic chair, the conversions across various systems ultimately disappointed. Initially the Spectrum and C64 versions were released with the Amstrad to follow shortly afterwards. Maybe that version was delayed because it required extra tweaking. If it did, it hadn't worked. It still ranks up there as one of the most lifeless games to disgrace the CPC.

There was good news for Amiga fans as Commodore announced news of the upgraded Amiga systems, which it planned to release early in 1988. The first would be an Amiga 500 with 1Mb of RAM, the second is the A2000 which would get an improved processor and the third, which had been announced six months previously and still not been glimpsed by anyone, was the A3000.

The A3000, which finally made its belated appearance at the end of 1990, featured a 32-bit microprocessor that was one of the main causes for the continued delays as, at that time, there was a worldwide shortage of the Motorola 68030 chips.

16-bit rivals, Atari, was also having supply problems with its 520ST machine. Such was the demand for the Atari ST for the Christmas period that the company found themselves with a shortage of machines to fill the prospective orders. Atari guesstimated the shortfall to be around 20,000 units in the UK alone and as many as 200,000 worldwide, leaving several red-faced parents attempting to explain to their sons and daughters why Santa had forgotten them this year. Never mind, have a satsuma in a sock instead.



» The first of many *Ricochet* games from Mastertronic bringing new life to old titles and more cash into their bank

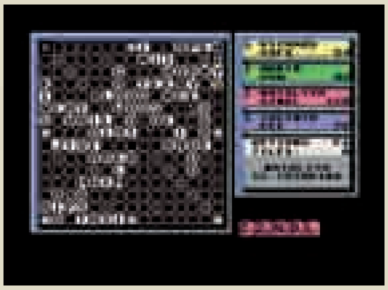


» Gah! Amstrad CPC *Out Run*. Stripey sky, freaky roads, ropey conversion. Not big and not clever

Not to be outdone and miss out on the 16-bit cash cow, Amstrad revealed a few details regarding its first dip into 16-bit territory. Although it did not reveal any precise machine specifications, Amstrad did indicate that the machine would be targeted as competition to the Amiga and Atari ST markets.

The machine was originally due for a December release, almost certainly indicating the end of the CPC6128, but the date was put back a few months due to several design setbacks including problems with the computer casing. When, or even if, the machine might make an appearance was still very much open to debate…

With the Christmas sales push in full swing it came as no surprise to see the magazines of the time chock full of the software titles all vying for a chunk of your pocket money.



» I'm absolutely sure ZAKQUIJ is a word. I am the champion with 1023 points!

THIS MONTH IN... CHARTS

1987

DECEMBER NEWS



» Gatting and Rana indulge in a bit of finger wagging that was much more interesting than the cricket

December 9 saw England cricket captain Mike Gatting and umpire Shakoor Rana indulging in much shouting and finger-pointing during the second test match in Faisalabad, Pakistan.

Gatting's rant came after simmering on-field tensions boiled over after claims of dodgy umpiring decisions favouring Pakistan. Umpire Rana later responded with his own accusation that Gatting was a cheat. I say chaps, that's not cricket…

December 1 saw the first digging stage of the construction of the Channel Tunnel linking England and France. Digging started on both sides of the Channel with two service tunnels meeting up 40 metres under the seabed just three years later.

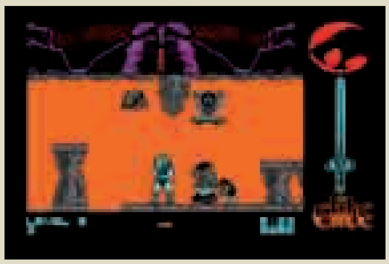
On the 21st, the Filipino passenger ferry, Doña Paz, collided with an oil tanker. The tanker and its contents quickly caught fire spreading to the massively overcrowded ferry causing it to sink in a sea of flames. The official death toll was listed at 1,550 casualties although it was thought to be nearer to 4,000.



» Just one of the pieces of digging equipment used to begin construction of the Channel Tunnel



» A towering game in more ways than one. Completely original and worthy of its Zzap! Gold Medal



» With Naughtyometer rising and Nappy Rash at critical levels, Jack seems destined for a trip to Sudocrem City

C64 owners were gorging themselves on fine software. The Sizzler award winners in issue 32 of Zzap!64 were *Maniac Mansion* (Lucasfilm), *Russia* (SSG), *Zig Zag* (Mirrorsoft), *Bangkok Knights* (System 3) and *Computer Scrabble Deluxe* (Virgin/Leisure Genius).

Buggy Boy (Elite) received an impressive 97% rating and a Gold Medal to buff during the cold winter months. That wasn't the end of the gold-giving however as there were not one but three Gold Medals this month.

The second Gold Medal winner was the *Shoot-'Em-Up Construction Kit* or *SEUCK* to friends. Produced by Sensible Software it allowed you to create your own games and was held in high esteem by the reviewers – with one rating it as, "one of the greatest packages ever released on the C64". High praise indeed.

The last in the golden trio was the fantastically original *Nebulus* (Hewson). The tower climbing-game grabbed the final Gold Medal making it quite a month for C64 software releases.

Over at Crash Towers two titles gained a Crash Smash award. The lonely two were *Gunship* (Microprose) and the Freescape game *Driller* (Incentive).

Unfortunately there was no issue of Amtix! because the magazine had ceased publication in April 1987 after just 18 issues. Thankfully, CPC owners had Future Publishing's Amstrad Action, a superb magazine and up to issue 27 itself, to expand into the void left by Amtix!

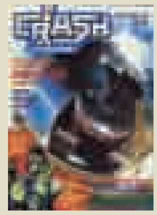
Amstrad Action had a similar software rankings and awards system to Zzap!64 in as much as there was a top rated game, awarded Mastergame status, with several other titles receiving an AA Rave award.

Amstrad gamers were graced with a varied selection of top notch gaming fodder for the festive month of December with *Red L.E.D.* (Starlight/Ariolasoft) given the highest award with the highly regarded 'Mastergame'. Trailing not far behind and all receiving an AA Rave were *Freddy Hardest* (Dinamic), *Killed Until Dead* (US Gold), *Thundercats* (Elite) and *Trantor* (US Gold).

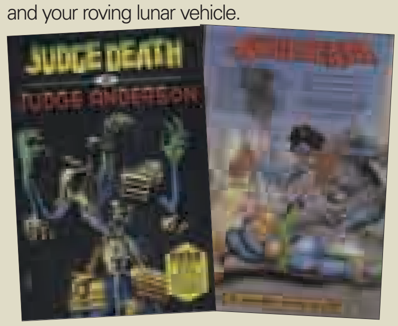
An interesting little curio reviewed in AA27 was the Telextext adaptor and tuner peripheral allowing Amstrad owners to receive Ceefax and Oracle on their CPC monitor. Costing £75 it was debatable whether it was worth the money. Would it get little more than superficial use once the novelty had worn off?

Amstrad Action decided otherwise by supporting it and revealing they would start placing their major type-in feature from each issue onto Oracle's Telesoftware service for download. Nice.

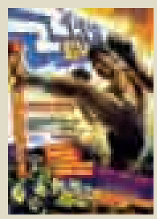
Crash Flash



Crash issue 47 also had the Judge Death comic freebie and gaunt dead fellow on the cover although the majority of space was given over to the Crash Smash 3D Freescape game, *Driller,* with a fish-eye lens view of the moonscape and your roving lunar vehicle.



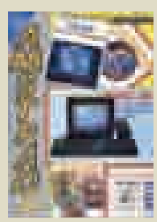
Zzap! Back



The cover of issue 32 paid homage to the Sizzled System 3 game, *Bangkok Knights.* Inside there was a free 2000AD mini comic featuring Judge Death as well as an insight into the forthcoming *Judge Death* game from Piranha. Unfortunately, it never saw the light of day…



Amstrad Action



With no fantastic artwork to grace the cover of AA, it looked a little bland in comparison to the Amtix! with Oli Frey art of old. Do not be fooled however. AA was a terrific read in the first few years under the control of Bob Wade and Chris Anderson.

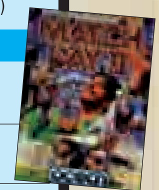


DECEMBER 1987



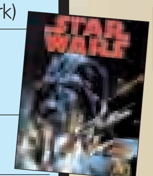
AMSTRAD

1 Combat School (Ocean)
2 Joe Blade (Players)
3 Grand Prix Simulator (Codemasters)
4 Match Day 2 (Ocean)
5 Thundercats (Elite)



SPECTRUM

1 Match Day 2 (Ocean)
2 Combat School (Ocean)
3 Star Wars (Domark)
4 Solid Gold (US Gold)
5 Grand Prix Simulator (Codemasters)



COMMODORE 64

1 Star Wars (Domark)
2 Grand Prix Simulator (Codemasters)
3 Combat School (Ocean)
4 California Games (Epyx)
5 Thundercats (Elite)

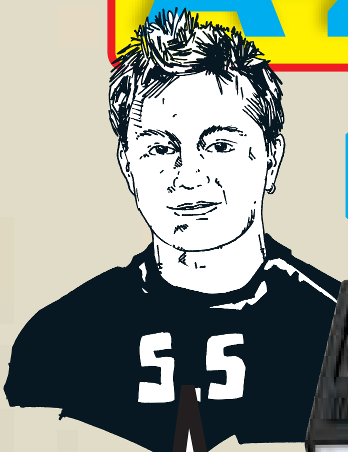
MUSIC SINGLES CHART JUNE '86

1 China In Your Hand (T'Pau)
2 Always On My Mind (Pet Shop Boys)
3 The Way You Make Me Feel (Michael Jackson)
4 When I Fall In Love (Rick Astley)
5 What Do You Want To Make Those Eyes At Me For (Shakin' Stevens)



Back to the Eighties

A-Z OF THE 80s



C IS FOR...

Take a trip through some classic, cult and retro moments of the Eighties. Some may have originated earlier but all made significant Eighties appearances and all are guaranteed to raise a smile and a knowing nod of appreciation. Feeling warm and gooey? That's nostalgia that is…





» Driving cars, flying jetplanes, making cocktails - is there anything the Cruiser can't do?



» Oh, and the actual catchphrase is holding down a job. We know what you were all thinking…

COLECOVISION

A significant player in the US console wars of the early Eighties, the ColecoVision (above) was released in 1982 with almost no games ready to ship when it went on sale. None, except for a quirky little exclusive Nintendo licence called *Donkey Kong*.

This game alone shot the console to the top of the charts, where Coleco's CEO tied a big noose around its neck and pushed it back off. The ColecoVision still sports a diehard fan base of gamers who put their fingers in their ears and shout "LA LA LA!" every time someone mentions Atari.

Sadly, the console failed to survive the 1984 market crash, and couldn't even be saved by a trip to the Babyland General Hospital. Which leads us nicely to...

CABBAGE PATCH KIDS

Originally called 'Little People', these unique toys were created by sculptor Xavier Roberts and were sold from an old, disused medical clinic by staff wearing doctors and nurses uniforms.

If that's not weird enough, rather than selling the dolls Roberts 'put them up for adoption', providing a unique birth certificate with each pug-faced, profitable progeny (shame it's not 'P' this month).

When Coleco established a toy-manufacturing arm, Roberts Little People were purchased and renamed Cabbage Patch Kids. Such was their appeal that Coleco manufactured over 2.5 million Kids in 1983 alone.

Unfortunately, the estimated US $1 billion profit from Cabbage Patch Kids was squandered trying to keep the ColecoVision and Adam computer alive, and by 1988, the Connecticut Leather Company was no more.



» Quite possibly the ugliest dolls we've ever seen. That didn't stop them from being a huge hit though

COCKTAIL

Nobody quite summed up the Eighties like cinema stud Thomas Cruise Mapother IV, or just Tom Cruise as he's known to his adoring public. Appearing in hit after hit after hit, from *Top Gun* to *Days Of Thunder*, you couldn't walk into a multiplex without being blinded by the scientologist's whiter than white teeth and megawatt smile.

Cocktail's plot is laughable: Cruise plays Brian Flanagan, a New York bartender who travels to Jamaica, throws lots of cocktails about, shags Elizabeth Shue, and well… that's about it.

Despite its abysmal story, *Cocktail* was a huge success and made a respectable $78,000,000 when it was released in 1988, even though Bryan Brown in it! Amazing.

CATCHPHRASE

High on the list of antiseptic, saccharine, play-it-safe Sunday evening viewing of the Eighties was *Catchphrase*, hosted by the original Irish potato impersonator, Roy Walker.

Famous for painstakingly scouring Britain for the most inept social retards who should never be allowed on TV, let alone a quiz show, *Catchphrase* delighted audiences with Mr Chip's dubious arm-pumping animations and a knack for running out of popular phrases after the first five minutes and resorting to bizarre half-sentences like "Pull It Out" and "Here I Come", seemingly designed to further lobotomise the poor contestants. It's good, but it's not the one.

CROCODILE DUNDEE

A massively successful experiment by Australian filmmakers to create a low budget flick that would appeal to an American audience, *Crocodile Dundee* became the second highest grossing film of 1986. Inspired by the life of Australian bushman, Rodney Ansell, Paul Hogan's character of Michael J. 'Crocodile' Dundee, raised by Aborigines in the outback and brought to New York City, inspired a brief but mutually profitable cultural exchange by the two British colonies.

Hogan then went on to marry the female lead, Linda Kozlowski, and with its genius array of catchphrases ("That's not a knife. That's a knife!" and "You can eat it, but it taste like shit") spawned the equally popular 1988 sequel, and a cinematic damp squib in 2001: *Crocodile Dundee In LA*.



» A great fish out of water tale that Paul Hogan was never able to top. Still, at least he got to marry his rather fit co-star…



» And you thought watching golf was boring….



» Yes it's incredibly simplistic to play but that doesn't stop Connect 4 from being great fun

CADDYSHACK

Caddyshack provides a rare insight into turn of the Eighties 'give it to the man' culture. Rich versus poor has been done countless times before, but seldom with such aplomb. Harold Ramis unwittingly co-wrote and directed a masterpiece that seldom moved from the golf course and clubhouse of Bushwood Country club.

Bill Murray plays the feckless down at heels grounds keeper who plays well below par and schemes his way through golfing's social order, while a pre rehab Chevvy Chase is the elitist new member causing havoc at every turn. Oh, and there's an evil Gopher.

Imbued with cracking dialogue "Pay no attention to that bush moving around over there by that tree, it's just a bush. Nothing to look twice at. Nothing to be alarmed about" and set against a back story of Judge Smails not noticing his nubile nieces interactions with the other members, Caddyshack is a classic that shouldn't be missed.

CHIPS

This action-packed, tastefully bouffanted series ran from 1977 to 1983 over six. Motorcycle-mounted California Highway Patrol officers Francis Llewellyn "Ponch" Poncherello and Jon Baker delighted massive audiences on a weekly basis with their particular brand of lightweight law enforcement.

The show saw a host of small time actors come and go from the haphazard cast (such as *Star Trek*'s Cornish pasty head, Michael Dorn and small screen American legend Robert Pine) and even the two stars Erik Estrada and Larry Wilcox were regular no-shows. Estrada failed to appear in several series 5 episodes due to a contract dispute – the same series that saw Wilcox replaced after he and Ponch fell out.

Rumour has it that a big screen remake is currently in the works, though neither Estrada nor Wilcox are set to star in it.

I was always Ponch when we played CHiPs. He was the best.

CONNECT 4

One of the most well known and iconic board games of our collective youths, the name Connect 4 was first coined by Milton Bradley in 1974, though the game is thought to pre-date that particular incarnation.

A remarkable misuse of spare time, there's not much more fun can be had than listing to the nostalgic sound of those coloured disks dropping into the cheap frame, followed by the triumphant plastic splash as the winner flips open the bottom.

Apparently, games of Connect 4 are used to break the ice between hookers and punters in Thai bars, though I've not done adequate research to substantiate this. Yet…

CHAS 'N' DAVE

Lawd above, my 'owd cocker! This pair a' daffy down dillies couldn't 'arf get a knees up goin' around the old Joanna down the battle cruiser!

Charles Hodges and David Peacock brought the gutter born people's music from the far East End to the people of Britain throughout the Eighties with their endearing, mildly risqué (yet always family friendly) refrains such as Knees Up Mother Brown, The Sideboard Song and Snooker Loopy.

Their popularity has known no bounds over the years, and a hook from one of their songs was even sampled by Eminem for his debut track, My Name Is. Laaaaaaaavley!





MORE Cs!



TOYS YOU HAD TO OWN

Care Bears
Cat's Cradle
Cliff Hangers
Crash Test Dummies
Crossbows & Catapults
Crossfire



» For a girl that just wanted to have fun she's looking pretty miserable here

OTHER BANDS YOU SWOONED OVER

The Cars
The Clash
Culture Club
The Cure
Curiosity Killed The Cat
Cyndi Lauper



MORE TV SHOWS YOU LOVED

Cagney & Lacey
Candid Camera
Charlie's Angels
The Cosby Show
Columbo
Charles In Charge



» And to think this fellow is now the Governor of California…

MORE FILMS YOU WERE WATCHING

Child's Play
Cobra
Coccon
Coming To America
Commando
Conan The Barbarian



KIDS SHOWS YOU WERE ENJOYING

Captain Caveman
Captain N: Gamesmaster
Care Bears
The Centurions
Challenge Of The Gobots
Count Duckula

» You can't see it here, but Captain Caveman has a rather large club

CHARTS!

Highest Grossing Movies of 1981

1	Raiders Of The Lost Ark ($242.4m*)
2	On Golden Pond ($119.2m)
3	Porky's ($105.5m)
4	Arthur ($95.5m)
5	Stripes ($85.3m)
6	For Your Eyes Only ($62.3m)
7	The Cannonball Run ($59.9m)
8	Chariots Of Fire (1981) ($58.8m)
9	Time Bandits ($42.4m)
10	Absence Of Malice ($40.7m)

* Includes pre-2002 releases



» The first Indiana Jones flick is still the best of the lot, watch it now on DVD

THE RETRO FORUM

HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – WWW.RETROGAMER.NET



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STAR LETTER!

BABY, BABY

Dear Retro Gamer,
Is this the youngest reader of the magazine? This is a picture of him, aged 3 hours, asleep after a long read of the latest issue.
Regards,
Nigel, Suzanne and baby Robert

We know we've been picking up some younger readers recently, but this is just getting ridiculous. Congratulations on your new arrival though and consider this Fossil Watch an early Christening present.

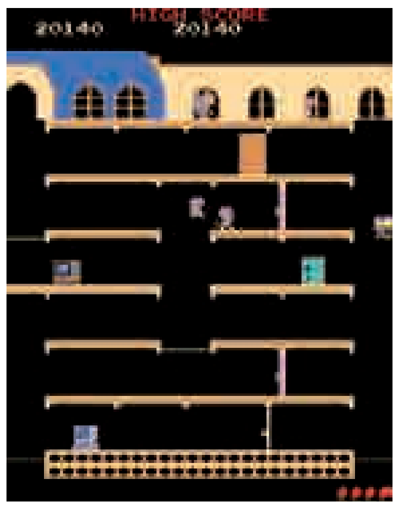


ARCADE PERFECT

Hello and greetings from Greece,
My name is Jordan and first of all my congratulations for your truly great magazine! It's the best read I've had since buying an old computer magazine called Pixel.

I was a huge fan of the Amstrad 6128 and Amiga 500 back in the day (they were certainly more popular in Greece than the other 8 and 16-bit machines). It's great to see all the old machines being resurrected, so great job guys. As well as playing on old machines I also happen to be an avid arcade collector and have picked up several classic PCBs from eBay and various locations in Greece. I think it would be fantastic if you looked into arcade games in greater detail. I'd love to see interviews with the people who made the different boards and it would be fantastic to have more in-depth information on them. I think the gaming scene of the Eighties and Nineties has its roots in those classics. Any future features you can do on the arcade scene will be greatly appreciated.
Thanks again,
Jordan Kousis, Athens

Glad you're enjoying the magazine Jordan and don't worry about arcade coverage in Retro Gamer, as we have plenty of interesting features planned over the next few issues. In the meantime, if you've not read it already why not check out our coverage on Sega's Model 2 board that can be found in issue 25?



» Classic arcade gaming doesn't get much better than this. No wonder people are still buying Namco compilations…



EVERY MONTH ONE lucky reader will receive a cool Fossil arcade watch courtesy of those lovely people at Fossil and Atari. All you have to do is present a lucid, thought-provoking piece of literature that melts our souls; failing that, something funny with swear words in it will go down just as well…

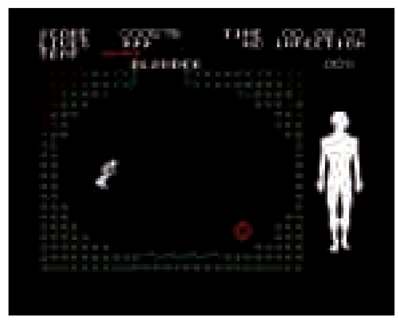
BODY TALK

Dear Retro Gamer,
I'm in the dark. I can't seem to remember a game I used to play on my Amstrad CPC back in 1988. I tried really hard to remember what it is, but my mind keeps drawing a blank.

The game in question looked a lot like *Solar Jetman*, but the hero had to explore the inner parts of the human body and would shoot at flying bacteria and fungi (don't laugh, it's true). I remember venturing into areas like the kidney, trachea and stuff like that and that the name of the area would appear at the bottom of the screen.
Can you help me with this please?
Thank you in advance.
Thanks for everything actually.

Tolis Yovanitis
178K Free
Athens, Greece

You're in luck Tolis, as we're pretty sure we know what game you're going on about. Head on over to www.cpcgamereviews.co.uk and check out the entry for Fantastic Voyage. If that's not the game you used to play then we'll shrink ourselves down to miniature proportions, climb inside a spaceship and live inside your colon.



GAVIN TO THE RESCUE

Dear Retro Gamer,
I had no idea that there was a retro gaming magazine in circulation so I was ecstatic to find yours sitting on the shelf of a local newsagent recently.

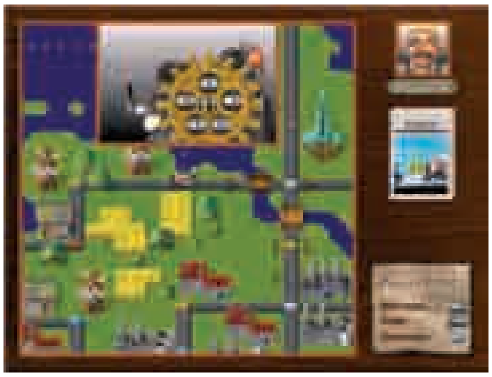
Reading through the magazine though it appeared you needed a little help with a reader's query about an old game. I believe the title they are looking for is *Dr Drago's Madcap Chase* by Blue Byte.

The game was released in 1997 and featured a mad chase around most of Europe to different destinations with a new round starting once the destination had been reached. The fun bit was getting rid of Dr Drago who used to chase you around and spend your money for you, or generally try to stitch you up in whatever way he can.

The good news is that the game is now classed as abandonware and can be freely downloaded from http://www.the-underdogs.info/game.php?id=326 but you will require WinG (available from the same link). However it appears that the windows XP mouse driver causes the game to glitch so it has to be played with keys (which is easy enough) although I personally don't remember having that problem with my original copy of *Dr Drago's Madcap Chase.*

Anyway, great magazine and keep up the good work.
Many thanks,
Gavin Powell

Thanks for the help Gavin; it's always great to see reader's helping each other out and I'm sure that Magnus is going to be very happy with your discovery when he reads the new issue.





» Could this be the game that was confounding one of our readers? If this is the correct game Magnus, then let us know

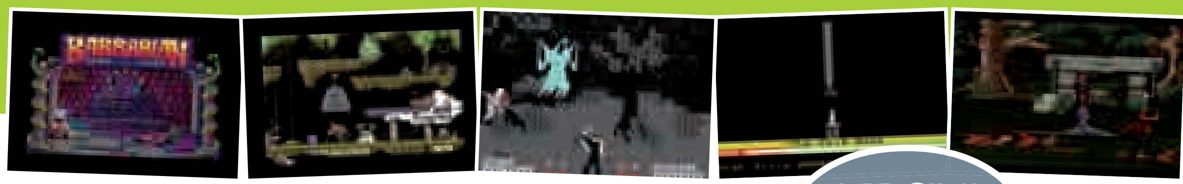
IN A BIND

Dear Retro Gamer,
So, it's been nine months now since you've been reborn. At first I didn't think you could do it, but you've actually created a much better magazine. Excellent job. I thought my monthly fix of retro gamer was down the toilet. Though something has been troubling me lately. What if one of my cherished magazines actually did go down into the toilet?

This is a very real threat.

This did nearly happen once when the toilet bookcase (that enables me to enjoy retro gamer while defecating) toppled over, while I was rearranging the Argos catalogues I have.

The only thing that could protect my collection would be a proper Retro Gamer binder. My overall social ineptness has taught me that the best way to get what I want



FROM THE FORUM

EVERY MONTH, RETRO GAMER WILL BE ASKING A QUESTION ON THE FORUM AND PRINTING THE BEST REPLIES. THIS MONTH WE ASKED: WHAT ARE YOUR FAVOURITE VIDEOGAME DEATHS? HERE ARE JUST A FEW OF YOUR REPLIES

ID: psj3809
Has to be *Manic Miner*, seeing that foot come all the way down to squash Miner Willy similar to *Monty Python* was excellent. The other classic is *Barbarian*, do the right move and your opponent's head came straight off only for a small goblin-like character to kick it out of screen.

ID: pottyboy
Mine has to be from *Tomb Raider 2*. If you fell off a really high cliff-ledge Lara would scream and come to a crippling death, complete with that all-elusive 'crunch' sound! It was even more painful if there were spikes at the bottom!

ID: Dizrythmia
The Prince of Persia falling into a pit. At the time the game was so realistic and fluid you just slightly felt the prince's pain as he fell onto the spikes. Also, the crunch sound that you could hear when he fell too far sent a shiver down my spine. They really programmed some good death scenes into that game.

ID: Sabreman
Got to be that scream in *Impossible Mission*. You don't even see the death but that scream is high comedy. The first time I heard it was when my brother was playing it, and I thought it was him doing it.

ID: Szczepaniak
Forget deaths, think death moves. *Mortal Kombat*, at the arcade, every bloody last one of them. Pun very much intended. No death was more satisfying than wrenching the still beating heart of your best friend clean out of his chest; in the game of course, in the game! Yes, always in the game. Remember that.

ID: duddyroar
If you're talking about death animations, it's gotta be *Battle Chess*. So many unique (not to mention disturbing) deaths – it's the only chess game I ever bothered to play!

ID: Robbo
The death scenes in *Dragon's Lair* are the most memorable to me – saw more of those deaths than any other game I can think of!

ID: Smurph
Hmm, that's a tough question. I loved *Ghosts 'N Goblins*: one hit, there he is in his breeks(?!)! 2nd hit, pile of bones. Simple and funny. I also loved Xain'd Sleena, when your last bit of energy got rudely stolen from you, your body/spacesuit got kind of sucked into a really cool vortex.

ID: kelp7
Got to be the lemmings getting nuked, very cute animals but fantastic fun seeing them all split into millions of pieces simultaneously... hmm, does that sound sick?

ID: felgekarp
I can't answer, as I've never died on any videogame ever, being all cool and everything.

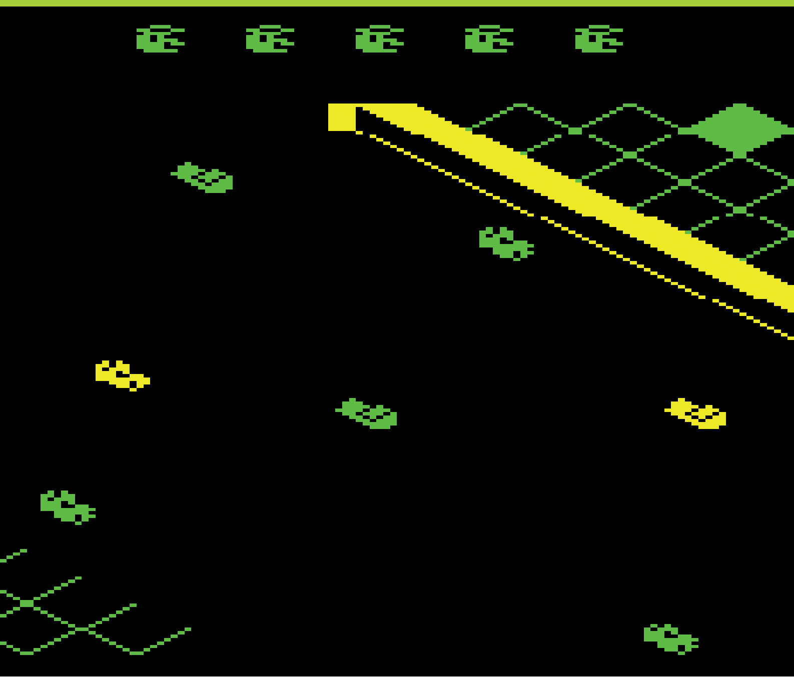
ID: Kenz
I'd vote for *Moonstone* on the Amiga. Sooooo many great deaths! There's one where your knight get smashed by a tree-wielding-tall-bloke which results in a huge red fountain splash splurging everywhere. Quality!

ID: revgiblet
I remember one cutscene from *The Operative: No-One Lives Forever* that had a great death. You've just free-fallen out of a plane and stolen a parachute from an enemy goon. The enemy goon is then shown falling towards a barn screaming, "Please be full of hay! Please be full of hay!" I laughed loads when I first saw that.

ID: CraigGrannell
The second torture screen in *Creatures*, where you furry mate gets sliced in half. Cartoon gore!

ID: Forestville
Populous 2 on the Amiga, when you give your opponent's race the plague and they have all got vultures circling them until they die and vanish into the ground.

THE RETRO FORUM



» Dont be fooled by its looks. Some of the games available for the Arcadia 2001 were pretty darn good

is through tantrums, insults and threats. So make me a binder you lazy nerds! Or I will go to modern bookbinders ltd, who made the last lot and I will make my own batch, and sell them for £70 each on eBay, thus making a fortune.

Seeing as I'm already threatening you, you may also do the following: more features on mame projects – stick the sx-64 in your retro price listings – forget the spectrum, it was absolute crap.

Best regards,
Ryan
South London

Funnily enough there's been quite a lot of interest in new binders, so it's something that we'll definitely be looking into very shortly. We're fully aware that most of your previous binders are now overflowing, so we'll do what we can to get this sorted as quickly as possible.

A PAIN

Dear Retro Gamer,

I hate to be a pain but I need to point out a few errors in your Buyer's Guide section.

Under the Arcadia 2001 section Emmerson should be spelt Emerson, and the *Robot Attack* game you've mentioned does not actually exist – presumably you meant either *Robot Killer* or *Space Attack*.

I am the Webmaster of Emerson Arcadia 2001 Central (http://www.deadwoodinc.net/amigan/arcadia/), the world's largest EA2001 site and I think it would be great if you gave this particular section of the console family ample coverage in Retro Gamer for the following reasons:

(a) It is the very first attempt as far as is known to establish a "console standard"; ie in much the same way as the MSX and 3DO were produced worldwide by various manufacturers according to a standard, the EA2001 family was similar.

(b) The machine has not been covered at all, except for the brief "Bargain Hunt" mention. It seems there is a tendency for the magazine to cover certain machines and games over and over again. Eg *Manic Miner*, *Head Over Heels*, *Elite*, Atari 2600, ZX Spectrum, etc have been done several times each.

(c) The emulation of these machines has improved remarkably in the last six months; virtually all games are now completely playable. Five emulators are currently available with another nearly finished.

(d) There is a considerable amount of very accurately researched, but not widely disseminated, knowledge about this machine.

It would be great if it could reach a wider readership.

Kindest regards,
James Jacobs
Amigan Software
Canberra, Australia

Thanks for the information James; we'll definitely look into giving the Emerson more coverage in a future issue of the magazine. As for your comments on recovering the same articles in the magazine, you have to remember that we're predominatively UK-based, so most of our coverage is going to be directly related to that territory.



» The Arcadia 2001 in all it's glory. Now, where can we get hold of one at a decent price?

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IMAGINE PUBLISHING

eMag



COMIX ZONE

PAPER, PAPER EVERYWHERE…



- **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- **RELEASED:** 1995
- **GENRE:** FIGHTING
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** MEGA DRIVE
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £3+



HISTORY

By 1995 the Mega Drive was on its last legs as the world prepared for the next generation of home consoles and the giant leap into three dimensions. Few cared for the ageing 16-bit machines any longer, but those who stuck with the SNES and Mega Drive knew that there were several reasons to stay 2D. One such example was the highly under-rated *Comix Zone*: a scrolling fighter by the Sega Technical Institute that put the player directly into the pages of a comic book. The lead character, Sketch Turner, had become trapped in his own comic and had to battle his way from front page to back as his own creations were drawn onto the screen right before the player's eyes.

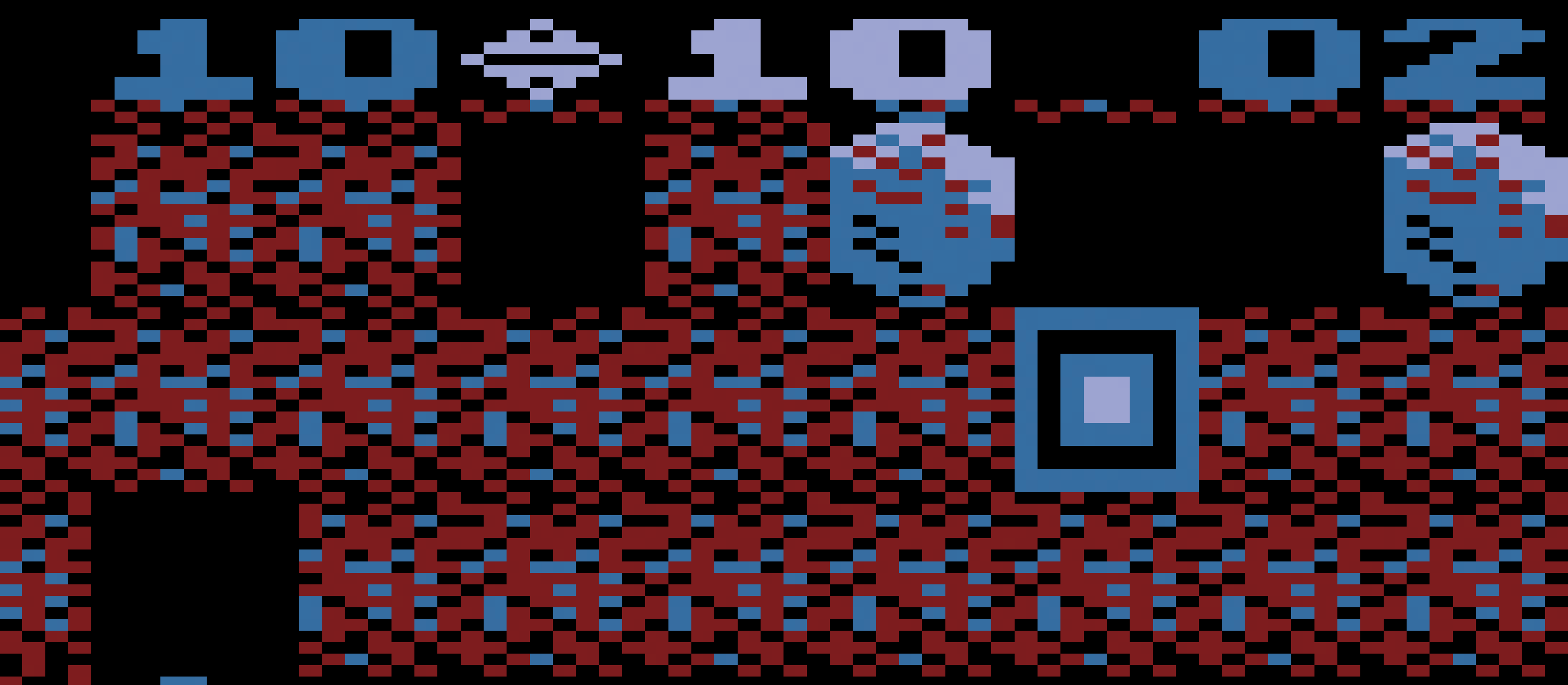
Comix Zone's combat is traditional in execution but it is the level design that makes this unique game so noteworthy. Each screen is a panel from the comic's page, in which the player can move between adjacent panels in any desired order. Leap left or right through the white, paper borders or climb and swing down into the panel below. By doing so the player may take a different route through each page every time and discover new secrets with each play through.

...and the secrets! *Comix Zone* has a wealth of secret items that are actually hidden between the pages of the comic book. The only way to discover them is to unleash Sketch's pet rat, Roadkill, and allow him to sniff them out. Upon detecting the unmistakable scent of a juicy power-up, Roadkill will gnaw at the page and tear it open to reveal whatever is hidden beneath.

With these nods to the comic book medium *Comix Zone* is a must-play for anyone who loves comics or simply enjoys an original, inventive videogame. It's a well-worn cliché but they really don't make 'em like this any more. Least of all because it wouldn't actually work in 3D.




IS THIS HOW YOU TREAT YOUR CREATOR??

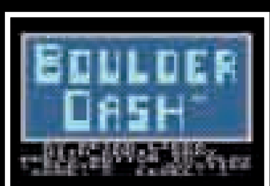


THE MAKING OF...

BOULDER DASH

Few games stand the test of time, but occasionally a gem appears so addictive that it features on each new generation of gaming platforms, even as the ones that spawned it fade into distant memory. Craig Grannell talks to Peter Liepa about the genesis of one such game: the inimitable *Boulder Dash*.

IN THE KNOW



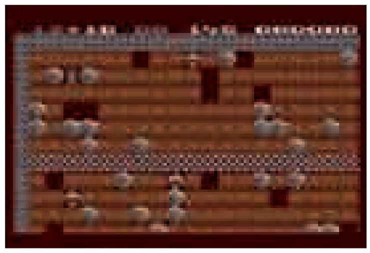
» **PUBLISHER:** FIRST STAR SOFTWARE
» **DEVELOPER:** PETER LIEPA
» **RELEASED:** 1984
» **GENRE:** PUZZLE/ARCADE/COLLECT-'EM-UP
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5+



The word 'classic' is bandied about all too frequently in the world of videogames, often awarded to titles that are 'merely' very good. A classic is a game that lives on through the ages, touching each generation of gamers anew, but still remaining a firm favourite with those who encounter it over the years. One such game is *Boulder Dash*, which since its release in 1984 on the Atari 400/800 has gone on to inspire numerous conversions and sequels. Despite modern versions of the game becoming increasingly complex and lacking the frenetic nature evident in Peter Liepa's original, the gameplay remains largely unchanged: you explore caves, dig through dirt and collect gems, avoiding obstacles and various nasties.

Surprisingly, the initial 'spark' that birthed *Boulder Dash* came from another programmer: Chris Gray. "In the early Eighties, a friend introduced me to videogames, and I thought 'I can write a game'. I bought an Atari 800 and contacted a local publisher," recalls Peter. "They introduced me to Chris Gray, who'd submitted a demo written in BASIC." Peter remembers that the demo was incomplete, and needed to be translated into assembler to be commercially viable, which he considered "a reasonable first project to get my feet wet". However, when Peter spent time with the game, he decided it wasn't worth converting. "The demo was named *Pitfall* and played just like *The Pit*, although Chris denied any knowledge of that game," explains Peter. "In Chris's version, the action was very hard-coded: rocks followed pre-determined sequences, and there wasn't much for the player to do." Contrary to popular belief, Chris's input largely ended at that point. "He must have thought he'd have the role of creative director, but it

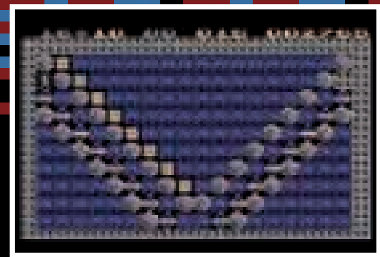
"THE THEME OF RICHNESS OUT OF SIMPLICITY ALWAYS APPEALED TO ME. SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO ACHIEVE SIMPLICITY BY RUTHLESS EDITING, BUT IN THE CASE OF BOULDER DASH, VERY LITTLE WAS LEFT OUT OR HONED DOWN" PETER LIEPA



» The introductory cave 'A' is described by Liepa as a 'granny' cave, so called because your grandmother could master it



» Surrounding the amoeba in cave 'G' with boulders converts it into lots of lovely diamonds



» One of the tricky 'intermission' levels. Complete this and you're one of the *Boulder Dash* elite!

didn't work out," says Peter. "We lived far apart, and our occasional meetings weren't helpful or productive, especially since I took off in my own direction very early on."

This direction, according to Peter, wasn't inspired by any existing games. Although *Boulder Dash* has certain similarities to *The Pit*, *Dig Dug* and *Mr. Do!*, Peter states he wasn't influenced by them, and that his game grew out of coding the physics for dirt and rocks: "The game's original graphics were crude – just squares, circles and spaces – and what evolved was a cellular automaton that encoded the basic physics of what was to become *Boulder Dash*. I used a random generator to set up screens full of rock and dirt that I could dig through using my joystick." With this basic system, it became clear that digging through dirt and figuring out how to get through configurations of rocks was an entertaining experience. "But this was a long way from being a game, I needed some way of keeping score, and so I added jewels. And I had to add risk, so now you died if you were hit by a rock." In addition to puzzle interest, the game was beginning to appeal to emotions like greed and fear. "In my memory, all this took just a few days," says Peter. "Although in reality things must have accumulated over weeks and months: adding sound effects, additional 'actors' like fireflies, butterflies and amoebae, static elements like walls and titanium walls, and so on."

Crucially, every element added to *Boulder Dash* was done for a specific reason, ensuring the creation remained tightly honed. "If you reduce the game to the currency of jewels and death, you'll understand how various characters arose, either as a way of generating more jewels (amoebae, butterflies, magic walls) or killing Rockford (fireflies, butterflies)," explains Peter. "Some of the other factors also played a role, but perhaps more implicitly than explicitly. For example, more passive characters like the brick walls, titanium walls and exits play a constraining or navigational role."

The game mechanics weren't the only thing being developed; when a potential publisher complained that the graphics weren't striking and that the digging character wasn't recognisable enough, the original cave size of 40 by 24 character blocks (with diminutive elements a mere eight pixels high) was ditched. In its place arose a chunky, rugged graphical style, with each entity composed of four character blocks. The digging character, Rockford, acquired personality and a somewhat strange appearance, as Peter explains: "The main requirement for Rockford was that he was able to run, but with so few pixels, you have little to work with. Once I'd drawn the feet, legs, torso and arms, what was left over made for a fairly large head, hence Rockford ended up looking like a Smurf. As for personality, when you stop moving the joystick, the game pretty much stops. To bring life back to those moments, I had Rockford blink and tap his feet. I'm proud of this effect, because it gives Rockford autonomy of his own – he's not just a puppet that you manipulate. I've seen this technique used in subsequent games, but I'd like to think I was the first to use it." With larger caves, scrolling was introduced. Instead of using a flick-screen approach or having the screen religiously follow Rockford, Peter gave the scrolling in *Boulder Dash* a kind of inertia, with it only kicking in when Rockford approached the edges of the screen and catching up when Rockford stopped moving. "Instant scrolling was too jarring, especially when Rockford moved in a complicated trajectory



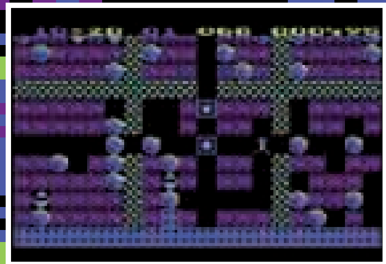
» Leave Rockford alone for too long and he stares out of the screen, arms crossed, impatiently tapping his foot



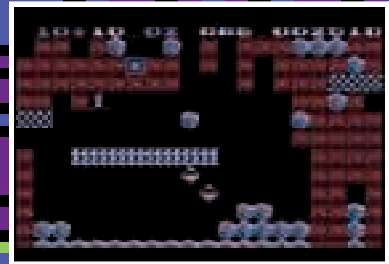
» Cave 'M' begins with you freeing numerous trapped butterflies… …which then must be guided to the ravenous amoeba at the top of the cave

THE MAKING OF…

BOULDER DASH



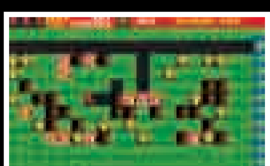
» Higher difficulty levels ramp up the speed and number of nasties: cave 'B' on level 5 has roaming fireflies that must be avoided or crushed



» The magic wall in cave 'H' enables you to convert boulders into much-needed diamonds – but only for a short time

CONVERSION CAPERS

In the Eighties, conversions of arcade games to home computers and consoles were commonplace. Few conversions occurred in the opposite direction, but *Boulder Dash* was one of them – the late Eighties saw *Rockford* enter the arcades as part of Arcadia's short-lived venture, which, oddly enough, used systems largely based on technology found in the Commodore Amiga home computer. Suitably, the *Rockford* arcade game was converted to home systems, resulting in a conversion of an arcade game that itself was largely a conversion of a home computer game! Sadly, the game was hardly breathtaking: stripped of the original's simple, charming graphics, *Rockford* was less intuitive than the *Boulder Dash* games that inspired it, because you had to figure out what each element represented in each environment you were placed in (such as the Old West or outer space). The game also felt clunky compared with the streamlined and fluid original.



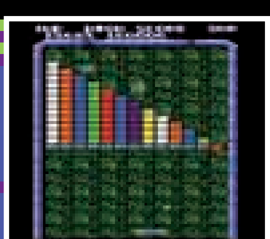
» *Rockford* on the Atari ST, in a reasonable conversion of the so-so arcade game that's a pale imitation of Liepa's original *Boulder Dash*

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

BATMAN – THE MOVIE
SYSTEM: AMSTRAD CPC, C64 & ZX SPECTRUM
YEAR: 1987

ARKANOID
SYSTEM: AMSTRAD CPC, ATARI 8-BIT, C64 & ZX SPECTRUM
YEAR: 1987

COMBAT SCHOOL
SYSTEMS: AMSTRAD CPC, C64 & ZX SPECTRUM



or one square at a time, so the idea came about that scrolling would start only when Rockford got close enough to an edge of the screen for it to be necessary. That way, scrolling would be minimised. This changed the gameplay as well, because you have less visibility into the areas you are approaching; you don't see them until you get closer to the edge of the screen."

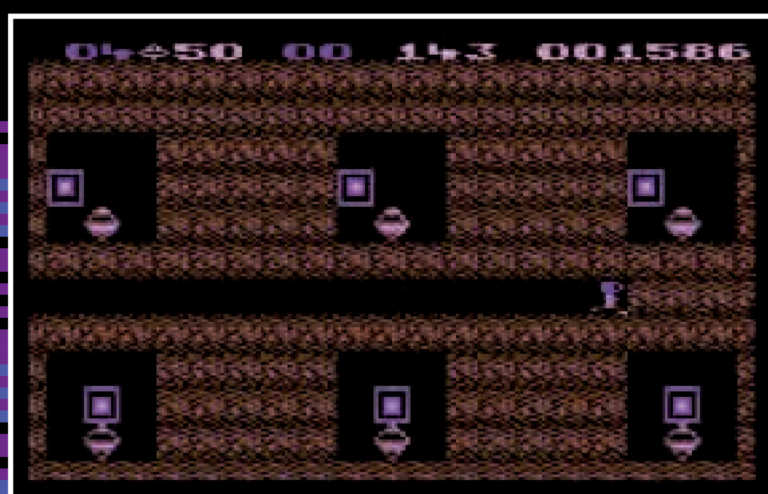
Remarkably, the development of the actual caves and puzzles took relatively little time. "I never created a cavern editor," says Peter. "Rather, I developed a simple cavern definition language that allowed me to draw points, lines and rectangles consisting of characters, along with specifying random densities. After this, it was easy to come up with caves on demand." According to Peter, he never believed that having difficulty levels was that important – they were added primarily to fit into the conventional mould of a videogame. "The levels differ by the allotted time limit for each cave and the overall density of things like rocks. Also, the first cave in the game was something I designed when First Star asked for an easy introductory level – a 'granny' cave that anybody could be successful in, so called because your grandmother could sit down and finish it!"

The result of Peter's planning and random elements combined to create a satisfying gaming experience that seemed to do so much with so little. The game balances two contradictory elements, being simultaneously clockwork (in the way fireflies and butterflies follow specific paths) and random (in the chaotic nature of an amoeba's growth, and Rockford's involvement, which affects many of the game's elements). "Randomness and determinism are used throughout the game. The boulders and jewels fall predictably, but randomness is used to place them. The caves are defined by very few elements – walls, fireflies, butterflies, amoebae, and a mix of rocks, dirt, and jewels that are defined just in terms of their frequencies. Their specific placements were up to a random number generator," explains Peter. "Essentially, randomisation was used as a lazy way of designing caves, but generally the arrangements that resulted are as challenging or interesting as if everything had been laid out by hand. So the contrast between regimentation and randomisation is a fundamental feature of the game – but it works not only at metaphysical levels, but also in very practical ways."

Another contrast in the game is that although the controls, rules, graphics and sound are all fairly simple, they combine to create an engaging and complex whole. "The theme of richness out of simplicity always appealed to me and guided the development of *Boulder Dash*. Sometimes you have to achieve simplicity by ruthless editing, but in the case of *Boulder Dash*, very little was left out or honed down," says Peter, noting that although he didn't want the game to be more complex, he regrets not making some of the caves larger and more epic. "However, when I say

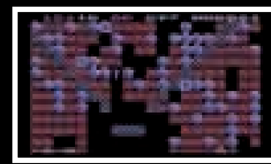


» Rockford makes short work of a firefly in cave 'F' by dropping a pile of boulders on it



» Cave 'E' has eight diamonds to collect, each of which is guarded by a deadly firefly

"IF YOU REDUCE THE GAME TO THE CURRENCY OF JEWELS AND DEATH, YOU'LL UNDERSTAND HOW VARIOUS CHARACTERS AROSE, EITHER AS A WAY OF GENERATING MORE JEWELS (AMOEBA, BUTTERFLIES, MAGIC WALL) OR KILLING ROCKFORD (FIREFLIES, BUTTERFLIES)" PETER LIEPA



» Arranging boulders is key in cave 'O' – guide them down the wall 'funnel' to the magic wall

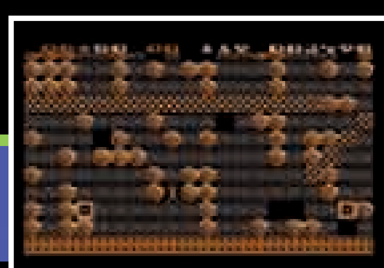
Boulder Dash was not honed down, I perhaps belie the reality that much was left on the cutting room floor, that many things evolved both individually and in their relationship to each other. But the process was organic and ongoing – like a Bonsai that's trimmed and watered daily, as opposed to some giant plant that has to be hacked down to size."

Upon its release, *Boulder Dash* was a smash hit and was hurriedly ported to other platforms. Despite this, Peter's debut game was almost his games-programming swansong. "Although *Boulder Dash* was successful, I didn't get much recognition for it – First Star thought it more important to promote itself as a developer, rather than promote me," he recalls. Consequently, Peter's involvement with the series dwindled: he wrote *Boulder Dash II* and then helped with subsequent sequels only in a troubleshooting capacity. Today, he's a software developer and 'math guy' at Autodesk, developers of Maya and Max, dominant creative applications in the entertainment industry. "But I don't regret how things turned out," Peter affirms. "I just don't think the response of the public was a part of the experience."

Things changed with the arrival of the Internet, whereupon people tracked Peter down and sent fan mail, or asked for interviews. The Web's rapid growth also led to a resurgence in *Boulder Dash*'s popularity, enabling fans to create fan sites and more easily swap caves made in various editors. Many online *Boulder Dash* games are now available from First Star Software, and the Game Boy Advanced remake even included a port of the PC version of the original. Despite the game's renewed popularity, Peter remains modest about the effect *Boulder Dash* has had on gaming history: "I've never been sure how much the game is known or acknowledged. It surprises me when I meet someone who tells me *Boulder Dash* was one of their favourite games as a kid – on the other hand, I'm disappointed when I leaf through a 'Top 100 Games Of All Time' article and don't see *Boulder Dash*. It's my impression that *Boulder Dash* isn't quite at the fame level of *Pac-Man*, *Tetris* or *Doom*, but I'm gratified that at least a few people remember it!"



» Timing is everything in the first intermission screen – you've one chance to crush the butterfly with the solitary boulder



» *Cave 'L'* is a puzzle-oriented effort akin to more recent *Boulder Dash* games: forward thinking is required to clear spaces, thereby providing access to all areas of the level

ROLL CALL

Boulder Dash's caves are composed of few elements. Aside from dirt, empty space, boulders and diamonds, there are destructible walls (which can be destroyed with explosions), indestructible titanium walls, and 'magic' walls, which convert boulders to diamonds – and vice versa – for a short time. Aside from Rockford, only three 'live' inhabitants populate the levels of the original game: fireflies, depicted as glowing squares, explode upon contact with falling boulders or an unfortunate Rockford, and move in a clockwise direction through empty spaces; butterflies move anti-clockwise and are similarly deadly, but usefully produce up to nine diamonds when crushed by a boulder; and the amoeba is a green ooze that eats into the surrounding dirt as it grows (and explodes fireflies or butterflies that it comes into contact with). Surround the amoeba with boulders and it turns into diamonds, but if it grows too big it turns in to boulders instead.

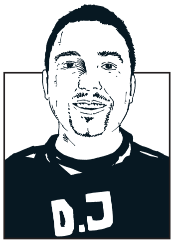
OTHER GAMES IN THE SERIES:

BOULDER DASH II: ROCKFORD'S REVENGE
BOULDER DASH 3
BOULDER DASH IV (WITH BOULDER DASH CONSTRUCTION KIT)
ROCKFORD: THE ARCADE GAME
BOULDER DASH EX
BOULDER DASH: XMAS 2002
BOULDER DASH: TREASURE PLEASURE
BOULDER DASH: M.E.
BOULDER DASH: POCKETPC EXTREME
BOULDER DASH: SMARTPHONE EXTREME
BOULDER DASH: TOURNAMENTS FOR PRIZES
BOULDER DASH: M.E. 2

INCREDIBLE INNOVATION » SCARY END OF LEVEL BADDIES » FINDING HIDDEN TREASURE » BEAT THAT GAME

MAGIC MOMENTS

Sometimes you'll play a game and certain parts of it will stay in your mind forever. Join us as we slip on our rose-tinted spectacles and look back at some of the greatest videogame moments of all time.



LET'S ROLL...

The majority of videogames either place you in a vehicle or force you to trudge through seemingly endless levels on foot. Fortunately, many developers are kind-hearted individuals and will often give you an alternative way of completing a stage. So join Retro Gamer as we look at a various methods of transport that you can use in videogames when you can't be arsed to walk.





» **Above:** Defeating enemies in *Ikari Warriors* was much easier in a tank



» The bosses in *Metal Slug* may be huge but your cute tank is more than able to deal with them…



» As the *Slug* series progressed, you could jump into all sorts of different vehicles

TANKS

» **FEATURED GAMES:** METAL SLUG, IKARI WARRIORS

While tanks have featured in videogames as far back as *Combat* and *Battlezone,* the ones we're interested in here are those that you could clamber into whenever you needed to take a quick breather and stretch your tired legs.

One of the earliest memories you'll probably have is of climbing into the handy tanks of SNK's *Ikari Warriors* and using them to take out scores of enemy soldiers. As handy as this was, special care had to be taken to ensure that you picked up the many fuel canisters that were lying around - otherwise your gleeful killing spree would come to an abrupt halt.

Perhaps the most famous videogame tanks though are those that appear in the wonderful *Metal Slug* franchise. While it's a typical run-'n-gun shooter featuring two pumped up commandos, the real star of the show is the titular Metal Slug that you can leap into at certain stages of the game. Boasting staggering animation, Nazca achieved the impossible and actually managed to give its metal creation as much personality as its two beefcake heroes.

DINOSAURS

» **FEATURED GAMES:** SUPER MARIO WORLD, CRASH BANDICOOT 3, TUROK 2

They may have been extinct for million of years, but that hasn't stopped developers from putting the 'Terrible Lizards' into a multitude of different computer games. While they mostly appeared as your foes, every now and then they would fight on the side of good.

Due to their huge size most dinosaurs make great mounts, so we often see them crop up in games like of *Crash Bandicoot 3.*

Perhaps the most famous dino though is Nintendo's Yoshi. First appearing in Nintendo's *Super Mario World* as the moustachioed one's trusty sidekick, such was Yoshi's popularity that he went on to star in his own games and soon became a regular part of the *Mario* universe. His best outing though is easily *Super Mario World 2: Yoshi's Island,* an epic platformer that sees a horde of the cute dino ferrying a baby Mario around. Ahhhhh



» Not content with eating apples, Yoshi was also rather partial to the add Koopa turtle



» Poor Yoshi patiently bore the heavy burden



MINE CARTS

» **FEATURED GAMES:** DONKEY KONG COUNTRY, INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM, JACK THE NIPPER 2, SPELLBOUND DIZZY, WORLD OF ILLUSION, GUNSTAR HEROES

The humble mine cart has proven to be a superb mode of transport over the years and has appeared in countless videogames. *Dynamite Dan*, *Spellbound Dizzy* and *Jack The Nipper 2* are early 8-bit examples of mine-carting frivolity, while the arcade hit *Indiana Jones And The Temple Of Doom* captured the film's frenetic mine cart chase perfectly and proved to be one of the main highlights of the game.

Even characters such as *Sonic* and *Donkey Kong* have relied on mine carts at various stages of their careers, with Kong's frantic race through an abandoned mine in *Donkey Kong Country* being particularly memorable. By far the most awesome sequence though is the one seen in Treasure's amazing *Gunstar Heroes*, (see issue 23's Magic Moments). It's a blisteringly fast rollercoaster of a ride that will have you gasping for breath, it really is that good.

When it all gets too much, why not relax with the Mega Drive's *World Of Illusion*, which sees Mickey and Donald taking it in turns to pump an old fashioned cart along a length of track. A delightful little sequence that perfectly highlights the co-operative teamwork that's needed to complete the game with a second player.



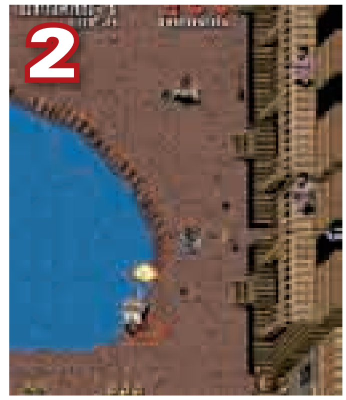
» The strangest mine cart chase you'll ever see



» "We're going underground, going underground…"



» Link and Epona bonding in *The Ocarina of Time*



» If he takes too many hits you'll soon lose your horse. Best watch out for those snipers ya hear?

HORSES

» **FEATURED GAMES:** THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE OCARINA OF TIME, GUN SMOKE, GUNFRIGHT

Technically, including Ultimate's *Gunfright* is cheating, as it's not really a mode of transport. Like a computerised Bernie Clifton your sheriff simply stuck his legs through the fake horse's body and raced around for all he was worth. Practical? No. Ball-achingly funny? Yes.

Capcom's *Gun Smoke* may be as tough as nails, but it does everything right and gives you a proper horse to ride. Granted, you've got to fight your way to him and the white steed can only take a few hits before disappearing, but considering the game's toughness its inclusion is appreciated. Another arcade mention should go to the horse sections in *Sunset Riders* that enable you to tear across the screen on a steed, although as with Sega's *Shinobi III* you can't actually get off your steed.

No such worries with the N64's *Ocarina Of Time* though. When Link needed to make his way across Hyrule's massive plains a quick whistle will immediately summon up his faithful steed Epona who will take the young hero wherever he needs to go. Awww.

DRAGONS

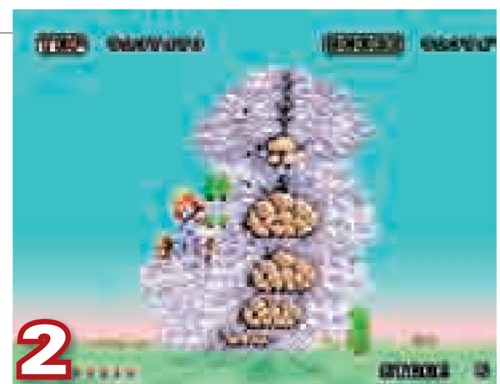
» **FEATURED GAMES:** SPACE HARRIER, DRAGON BREED, GOLDEN AXE, PANZER DRAGOON SAGA

While early titles such as Durell Software's superb *Thanatos* allowed you to blaze across the skies as a vicious dragon, the games that you could actually ride them in were rare. Irem's 1989 *Dragon Breed* allowed you to jump off the back of your dangerous steed and go it alone on foot, while Sega's *Golden Axe let* your vengeful warriors leap onto the backs of any available dragon in order to gain the upper hand against Death Adder's army. Then you have *Space Harrier*'s equivalent of *The NeverEnding Story*'s Luck Dragon. One moment you're dishing out laser death against any dragon that comes into view, the next your riding on the back of one and trying to destroy as many trees as possible in the game's nifty bonus round.

There are plenty more to choose from but the one game above all others that remains firmly lodged in our minds is the beautiful *Panzer Dragoon Saga*. While Azel is grounded in the game's many cities, the moments (and there are many) when you take to the skies are magnificent. In fact, this game perhaps more than any other here demands its very own feature…



» Quite simply once of the greatest games to ever grace Sega's Saturn. It's criminal that there's never been a sequel. Come on Sega, give us some love



» "It's a NeverEnding Story, woah, woah, woah, woah, woah, woah"



» Jumping on a dragon and running around causing carnage was great fun



» Of course, when the tables were turned, things suddenly got a lot more dangerous

CONCLUSION

Of course, the above modes of transport and featured games should hardly be considered as definitive, we just wanted to share some of our favourite moments. If there are any that we missed out that you feel are worthy of a mention then get in touch with us at retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk.

CLASSIC GAMING ON A BUDGET

CHEAP AS CHIPS



If there's one thing we've learned about retrogaming, it's that your money can stratch an amazingly long way if you really want it to. Granted, a mint copy of *Radiant Silvergun* is going to cost you a small fortune, but there are plenty of other worthy titles that can be picked up for less than a fiver. This month's bargain is Techno Soft's *Thunder Force II*. It costs less than a trip to the cinema and will last a damn sight longer.

THUNDER FORCE II

- **SYSTEM:** SEGA MEGA DRIVE
- **RELEASED:** 1989
- **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- **DEVELOPER:** TECHNO SOFT



» Simple, to the point and surely the greatest ship ever...

***Thunder Force II* may be the most forgotten of the three Mega Drive games in the series, but it's the first that displayed the excellence that would become the hallmark for all future *Thunder Force* releases.** Graphically sublime for its time, with a music score to match, it was also the first time that we heard the sexy female android who announced the game's power-ups.

If you've picked up *Thunder Force II* second-hand, it's possible that the cartridge will have passed through many hands before you get to boot it up. Take a moment to try and imagine its life; many gamers would have become obsessed and seen the game to completion, just as many would have no doubt taken it back to the vendor due to its ruthless nature.

1989 saw its initial release on the Mega Drive and its amazing how after 17 years it still retains a freshness that supermarket shoppers can only dream of.

Taking control of the Fire Leo 2 is truly exhilarating; the game starts in an overhead mode, allowing movement in all directions, hemmed in by electronic shields and walls; survival is your first objective, destroying the generators your next.



» "We're gotta get out of this place, if it's the last thing we ever do"

Armed with early versions of the now legendary Claw, Hunter, Blade and 5-way attack, the Fire Leo 2 hurtles around tight spaces warding off attackers from all angles. All the while, you, the player, attempt to navigate the labyrinth within the level, flicking between forward, backward and multi-shot.

As you progress through the routine enemies *Thunder Force II* throws a few surprises at the player, none more endearing and annoying than the droid ships that stalk you. Cross the last force field and you're rewarded with the obligatory end of level boss.

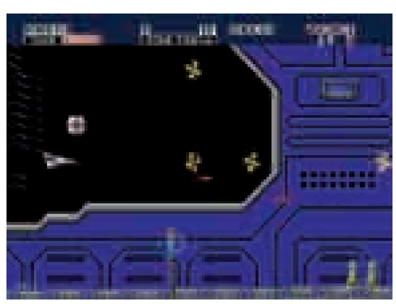
As the boss dissipates back into the dark matter from which it came the next level starts and it's more akin to the more successful games in the series, side-scrolling with multi-routes, it's great to see the influences from other games here sitting somewhere between *Gradius* and *R-Type* in its execution, and very nearly performs both with the sheer ferocity of its enemies and that truly exquisite weapon set that only the *Thunder Force* games have.

And so with the end of the horizontal level it's back to another free-roaming overhead level and the action reaches insane levels of difficulty. Rinse, lather and repeat and that's *Thunder Force II* in a nutshell. High scores really matter, the difficulty curve is a steep one and no two games are ever the same thanks to some very clever attack patterns. The free-roaming nature of the overhead levels makes for an interesting departure for the series, for as well as presenting the franchise in a different light, it adds to the freshness, as the attack patterns are totally random. If you don't where you are going how on earth could a CPU?

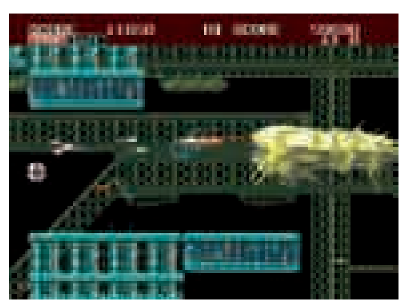
If you could finish this on one credit it would take over two hours – you won't though, and that just makes the game all the more compelling. For less than a fiver you can't go wrong, hell if you see it, buy your mate one too.



» It looks like so many other games, influenced and influential



» And those missiles won't just sit there you know



» I had a bit part in *Thunder Force II* before I made it big in *Darius*

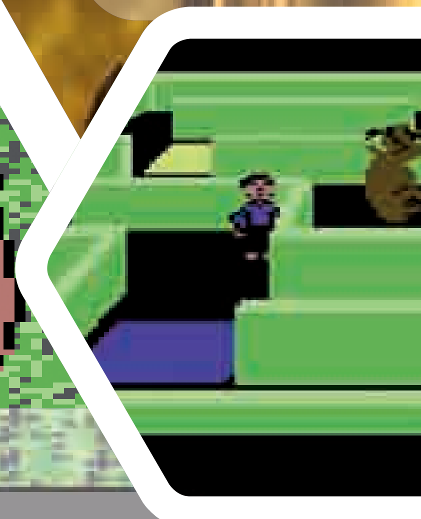
eMag



While LucasArts is well known for its output on the Star Wars series, there was a time when it was renowned for being responsible for original product and technological advances. Kim Wild chats to the minds behind the classics and LucasArts' beginnings.







The formation of LucasFilm's Computer Division Games Project harks back to 1982 although it wouldn't be until 1984 that the firm would become known as LucasArts. George Lucas wanted to create a videogame splinter company to LucasFilm dedicated to his movie creations. Atari played a big role in this respect as it had been responsible for the development of the *Star Wars* arcade game and George Lucas had seen the potential of the emerging technology. As David Fox, former LucasFilm employee who created *Zak McKracken*, explains "this led to a discussion about creating games for the Atari home videogame platforms (VCS and 5200). So in the spring of 1982, Atari paid LucasFilm $1M to start a games group, and got the first rights of refusal on any games produced." The division was set-up next to Industrial Light & Magic (ILM), the company behind *Star Wars*' visual effects and was situated next to the division that would later be sold to Steve Jobs and be renamed as Pixar.

Peter Langston was hired by the company to recruit staff, with the first member to be Rob Poor from the laser film printer project. The second staff member was David Fox who "had interviewed several members of the Lucasfilm Computer Division for my book on computer animation, *Computer Animation Primer* (available for free at http://www.atariarchives.org/cap/). The first half of the book dealt with state-of-the-art CG, and the second half on doing animation on the Atari 800 home computer. So when I heard LucasFilm was starting a games group, I quickly got back in touch with them and ended up as employee #2 in the group."

David Levine, Eric Benson, Gary Winnick and Charlie Kellner followed, with Steve Arnold eventually joining after leaving Atari and Noah Falstein adding to the team. Noah Falstein had already been working within the computer industry since 1976, branching into games in 1980 at the Advance Research group at Milton Bradley Company. After various projects collapsing at the firm, Noah moved to Williams Electronics and it was here he first heard about the new games start up. "I was at Williams Electronics in Chicago and a friend used me as a reference, that's when I heard they were even in existence – at that point it was the LucasFilm games group, not LucasArts, and hadn't released or even announced any games. Several months later I was laid off at Williams (the arcade industry crashed in 1984) and called up David Fox who I had spoken with earlier, and got a job."

A handful of the group begin development on game creation tools as well as a handful of games to use as test subjects. The tools allowed the team to develop on UNIX workstations and download the software onto specific hardware, an innovation within the industry at the time.

In 1983, the progress of two games *Ballblaster* and *Rebel Rescue* (which would later be known as *Ballblazer* and *Rescue On Fractalus!*) was shown to Atari who were impressed with their development and asked them to complete the titles. *Ballblazer* was a futuristic soccer game played either against the computer or a human opponent. The sport takes place on a 3D playfield with the playing controlling a Rotofoil aiming to capture a floating ball called a

IN BRIEF

LucasArts was first formed in 1982 when George Lucas decided to create a videogame that would be dedicated to his movie creations. Initially set up next to Industrial Light & Magic, the new company immediately found success with titles such as *Ballblazer, The Eidolon* and *Rescue on Fractalus!* company. As time passed, LucasArts (which was initially known as LucasFilm) breathed new life into the graphic adventure genre, and released more Star Wars titles (some good, many bad) than we've had hot dinners. 24 years on and it's still going strong.



DEVELOPER LOOKBACK

LUCASARTS (PART ONE)

Plasmorb, which would then be shot into the opponent's goal, with more points awarded the further away from goal you were. The Rotofoil either faces the ball if the opponent is in possession or the goal if the player has it, making it impossible to get lost on the field. Taking place from a split-screen first-person perspective, *Ballblazer* had a musical score which reacted to what was going on, giving the player important audio cues as to their current status. For its time, the use of music that reacted to the player's actions and therefore never repeated itself, was groundbreaking for the industry and has only ever been replicated in a small number of games to date.

Rebel Rescue as it was then known was played from a 3D first-person point of view and involved rescuing stranded pilots on planet Fractalas. Once the allocated number of pilots was saved, it was time to return to the mother ship and move onto the next stage. The spaceship was equipped with instruments like a compass, altimeter and scanner to help locate the pilots, while torpedoes could be used to defend yourself from the J'hagga Ri Kachatki aka Jaggies. Their name is derived from the new graphic technology used by the Computer Division called anti-aliasing which removed jagged lines around the edges of objects by using extra colours. As the Atari 800 didn't have enough colours to make use of the technology, the jaggy lines remained and thus, a monster's identity was created.

In May 1984, the final versions are delivered to Atari and a press conference is held to announce its upcoming release. In order to give the Atari 5200 and the new 7800 exclusives, Atari holds back the release of the Atari 800 versions. Both games receive glowing reviews from the specialist press although sadly, pirated versions appeared on BBoards around the world which had a huge impact on their sales.

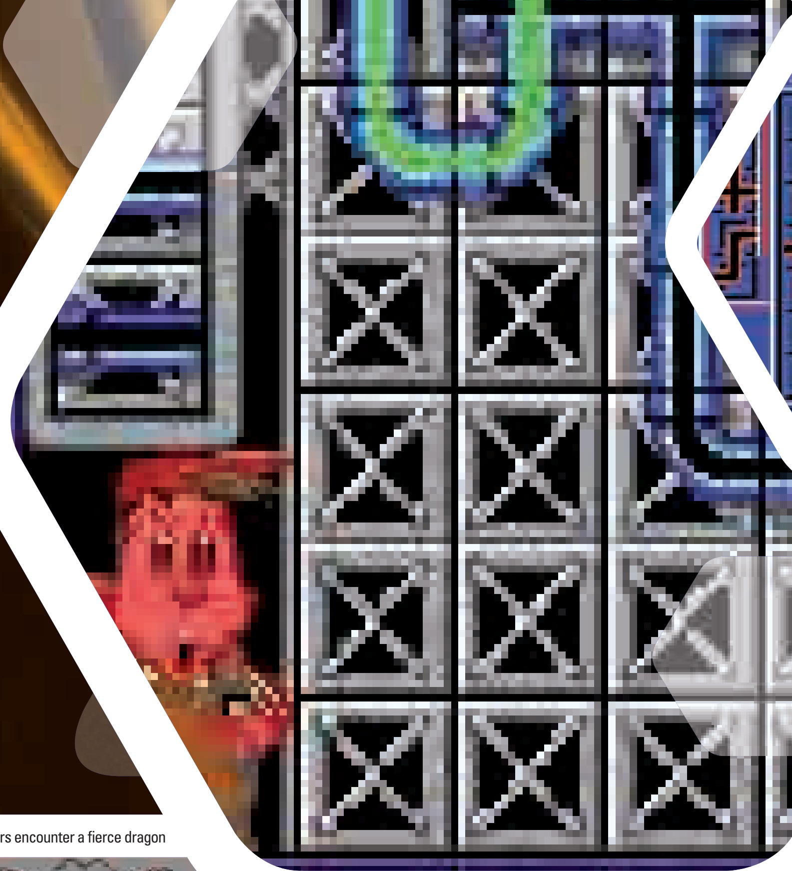
Around this time, Atari's management changed and decided to negotiate the contract with LucasFilm, which brought an end to its involvement with the company. Peter Langston left the company and Steve Arnold took over, with LucasFilm now changing into LucasArts.

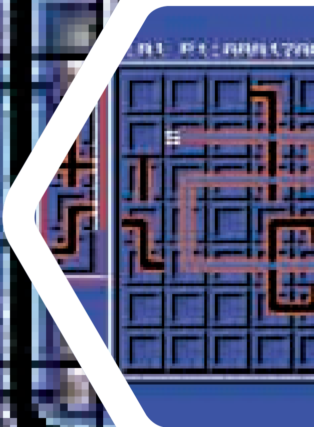
Rescue On Fractalus! was inspired by the *Star Wars* movie and was a first-person flight sim set in a science fiction setting, with its original name, *Rebel Rescue*, paying homage to the Rebel guys

> "IN THE SPRING OF 1982, ATARI PAID LUCASFILM $1M TO START A GAMES GROUP, AND GOT THE FIRST RIGHTS OF REFUSAL ON ANY GAMES PRODUCED" DAVID FOX



» An advert for *Eidolon*. The game received a gold medal award from Zzap magazine







» Here players encounter a fierce dragon



» Rotating pieces to construct a pipe was harder than it looks



in the movie. David Fox explains a little more about the game's inception. "When I first joined the company, I shared an office with Loren Carpenter of the Computer Graphics Division. He was well-known for his work in creating an animated flying film through fractal landscapes. I asked if he thought there was any chance we could get fractals to work on an 8-bit home computer. He thought about it and decided to give it a try. We got Loren "on loan" for several months and he programmed the 3D fractal engine for the game. Since we were using fractals to generate the landscape, we decided to name the planet after this. And since it was a search and rescue game, we used Rescue. We had other titles before that: *Rebel Rescue*, *Behind Jaggi Lines*, *Rescue Mission*, but this was the one we ended up with."

The final version of the game differed slightly from the original with the addition of a fire button. "You had to destroy your enemies by getting them to follow you, fly towards a canyon wall, and at the last second, veer away, causing the enemy to crash into the wall. I was into non-violence, and thought that would be an innovative way to solve the problem. When George Lucas first saw our games, he wanted to know where the fire button was. I explained my reasoning, and he said to add the fire button. So I did. George also had the idea to create tension by making the pilots you rescue sometimes be an alien instead of a human… very nice touch! We managed to keep this a secret, and I've gotten many e-mails through the years of people remembering their experience the first time an alien jumped up and smashed in the windscreen."

Koronis Rift followed in 1985 – a game Noah Falstein was involved with. Set in 2049, players find themselves on a far away planet trying to recover technology and weaponry seemingly abandoned by alien spaceships. While sending droids to recover the technology, aliens and flying saucers would do all they could to hinder your progress, resulting in plenty of space combat. "I was very impressed with *Rescue On Fractalus!* that had used 3D fractal techniques for the first time to create a true 3D experience." explains Noah regarding the origins of the game. "I wanted to go a step further. The mountains in *Rescue* popped into existence disturbingly close, and I wanted to create a smoother look – that suggested being on the ground and moving a little slower, and from there I moved on to the concept of piloting a tank on an alien world. Someone pointed out to me recently that in some ways *Koronis Rift* was the very first FPS game, as you played it from first-person and moved around, fighting enemies, and picking up weapons and defences as you went."

The Eidolon was also released in 1985 which was named after a spherical shaped, human-sized globe that let its user venture into his or her own mind. As a first-person fantasy RPG, ten levels of mazelike tunnels would await the player, full of dragons, trolls and other misfit creations. A combination of diamonds had to be collected which were guarded by stone statues and could be defeated by shooting them with energy balls. Failure to destroy the guardians of the tunnels would result in the Eidolon losing power and restarting the level (or worse the game if you exhaust the time

> "WHEN GEORGE LUCAS FIRST SAW OUR GAMES, HE WANTED TO KNOW WHERE THE FIRE BUTTON WAS. I EXPLAINED, BUT HE SAID TO ADD THE FIRE BUTTON. SO I DID" DAVID FOX

SCARING GAMERS

Rescue On Fractalus! had a reputation for spooking gamers long before the horror genre was invented. Here are a few e-emails David Fox has received from fans.

"One night when I was alone in my darkened dorm room I was playing *RoF* for the first time (it was around midnight and I hadn't slept in two days), when the Jaggi jumped on the windshield. I let out a scream that woke up my neighbours and I fell out of my chair. They came knocking on my door wondering what the hell happened."

"One single event remains deeply etched in my memory – the first time one of those aliens appeared at the windscreen. I was playing in my darkened bedroom staring intently at the TV and I got such a start. It took about an hour for my heart rate to return to something near normal."





» Habitat, an early multi-player online RPG was ahead of its time



» **Left to right:** Charlie Kellner, David Levine, Peter Langston, David Fox, Loren Carpenter and Gary Winnick



» Getting captured was a common problem in *Maniac Mansion*



» *Maniac Mansion* was the first game to use the SCUMM system



» *Labyrinth* was the first adventure game that LucasArts developed and was based on the hit film starring David Bowie

limit). *Eidolon* was the first game to introduce scaling, meaning characters would change size as they walked away or towards the screen, introducing depth to the environments. This meant different scenes could re-use artwork and cut down programming time. It would be a feature that would be used in most adventure games from the company.

Habitat played a part in kick-starting the MMORPG genre, inspired by computer hacker science fiction and cyberpunk, with Vernor Vinge's novel *True Names* cited as a big part in the game's conception. Each player could use their computer (initially the Commodore 64) with a modem to connect to a network and interact with the world and other users. Players are represented by pictorial avatars which can move around, pick up and put down objects and talk to each other, all with the use of a joystick and keyboard commands. Weapons and guns were incorporated into the game, a controversial move that had repercussions early on. Although dying just meant being teleported back home, any items carried would be lost, leaving the system open to thievery. When some players began to complain about the aspect of murder, it was limited to the wilderness outside of the city to provide a safe haven for those who didn't approve of such antics. A public meeting was held in the in-game town hall, where an election was held and a Sheriff was assigned to the town of Populopolis. Unfortunately the trial service came to an end shortly afterwards. You can read more about Habitat at http://www.fudco.com/habitat/.

The late Eighties would see LucasFilm experiment with the world of simulation, releasing *PHM Pegasus*, which went onto to sell over 100,000 copies. Its follow up *Strike Fleet*, focused on locations such as the Persian Gulf and Falkland Islands while offering a more strategic style of play. The acclaimed *Battlehawk* trilogy would follow based on World War II air combat, with the first title *1942* praised by critics for being historically accurate. In a move that definitely wouldn't happen in today's world of paper thin manuals and PDF files, *Battlehawk 1942*'s boasted over 150 pages of content crammed to the brim with archived photos and detailed information on the featured planes.

LucasArts also tapped into the puzzle genre with *Pipe Dream* (also known as *Pipe Mania*) where players had to construct a pipeline with different parts under a time limit. Toxic sewage would slowly flow along the pipe as it was being assembled, making the task even more challenging. Should any of the toxic goo leak, the game was over.

THE BEGINNING OF THE ADVENTURE GENRE

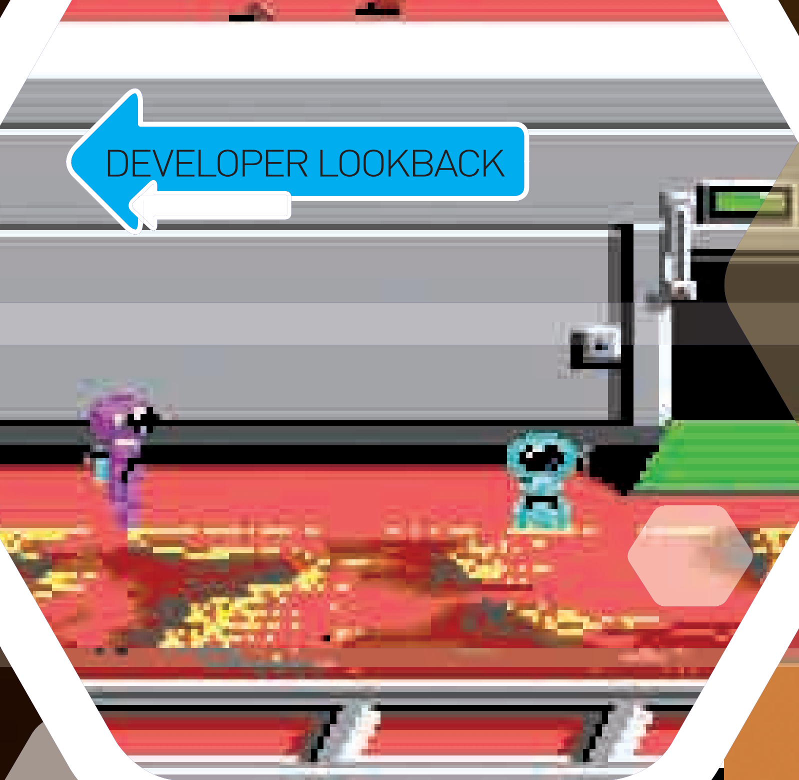
The game that initiated the adventure output from LucasFilm was *Labyrinth* in 1986, the first licensed title that the company worked on. Based on the Jim Hensen movie of the same name, *Labyrinth* started off as a text game set in the real world, transforming into a coloured fantasy adventure upon reaching the lair of Jareth the evil Goblin King. David Fox, who designed *Labyrinth* and was the Project Leader, explains the decision behind the mixed gameplay. "We knew we didn't want a text interface for giving commands (text parser), so we came up with a "slot machine" interface – essentially letting you mix and match verbs/objects to give commands. We also had a click-to-move interface, scrolling backgrounds, and scaling characters (they changed size as they moved away from the camera)." Although developed by LucasFilm, the game was published by Activision and vanished into obscurity shortly after release.

Maniac Mansion would be the title that boosted LucasArt's increasing popularity. Inspired by Gary Winnick and Ron Gilbert's love of horror movies, Maniac Mansion introduced the SCUMM interface which came about "because I'm lazy and don't like to type." explains Ron Gilbert. "I hated playing adventure games where I had to type everything in, and I hated playing the 'second guess the parser' game so I figure everything should be point-

HIDDEN DEPTHS

Running gags and references to different adventures are part and parcel of the close-knit community between the programmers. *Zak McKracken* features a poster of *Maniac Mansion* in the local store, *Monkey Island* has a pirate blatantly advertising musical masterpiece *Loom* and a picture of *Sam & Max* can be spotted in *Day Of The Tentacle*. The best-hidden item of all is the inclusion of *Maniac Mansion* inside *Day Of The Tentacle*, which could be accessed by using a computer. Eagle-eyed fans may also have noticed the shadow of max projected onto the stage in *Curse Of Monkey Island* while tinkering with the lights. David Fox recalls his favourite from *Zak McKracken* being "the gas can in a locker on Mars with chainsaw gas… one of the more frustrating items we had in *Maniac Mansion* was a chainsaw that had no gas – there really wasn't anything you could do with it in that game."



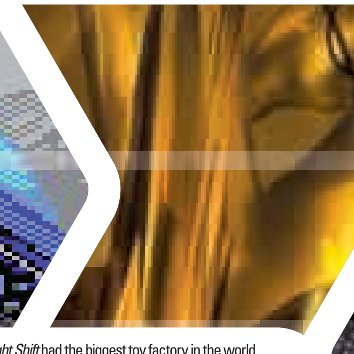


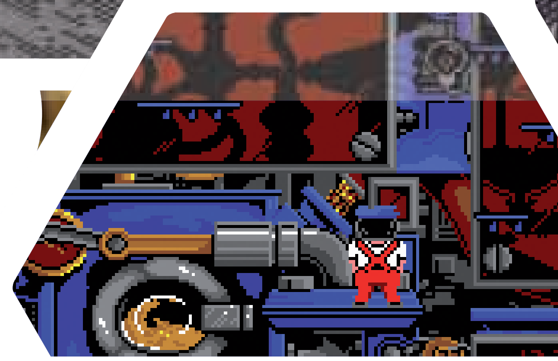
» At a certain point, it is possible to control all four characters like *Maniac Mansion*



» *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis*. Sheer genius

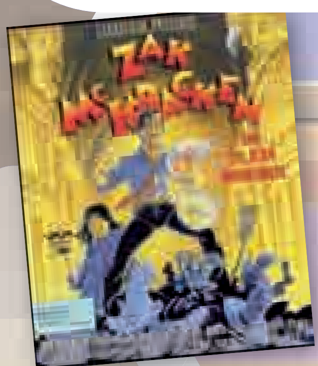






» *Night Shift* had the biggest toy factory in the world





» Very few people know that Steve Purcell painted this cover

THE ART OF LUCASARTS

It is inevitable with the pedigree of a company like LucasArts that someone would want to document it, which is the case of former Lucasfilm Computer Division employee Michael Rubin, whose book Droidmaker (http://www.droidmaker.com/) reveals "the inside story of George Lucas, his intensely private company, and their work to revolutionize filmmaking." Michael Rubin is also well known for his previous book *Defending The Galaxy* written in 1982, released in an era surrounded by hint books, which explored the culture of videogames, the games themselves and their passion. *Droidmaker* looks into the birth of Pixar, THX sound, digital video editing, their role in technological advances and a brief look at the creation of the videogames division, detailing the years up to 1987. Images and interviews of key participants from LucasFilm, Pixar- plus George Lucas himself- are also included. Those interested can download an extract chapter from the website.

and-click. Today people look back like it was some kind of Moses Moment, but at the time, the decision went largely unnoticed."

The adventure had a non-linear approach, with the ability to switch between characters and each had puzzles that only they could solve – something that had its difficulties. "That was tricky to implement. The permutations of how they can all interact are quite large. We made huge puzzle charts with all the possibilities. Each kid had two or three puzzles that only they could solve and that helped keep everything in line. I'm not sure I would do it again." Many of the characters were inspired by real life individuals, although Ron refuses to comment on whom adding "no, despite what one magazine published, Nurse Edna is not my mom." The NES conversion had to be altered to fit in with Nintendo's strict guidelines, with the arcade game renamed from *KILL THRILL* to *TUNA* and some of the dialogue changed (for more info on the changes made, visit http://www.crockford.com/wrrrld/maniac.html).

After *Maniac Mansion*'s success, it was inevitable that more adventures would follow. *Zak McKracken* and *The Alien Mindbenders*, designed and programmed by David Fox along with a team of six to eight people, was the next game to be released. It was during this time period that Steve Purcell became a contractor for LucasFilm who was commissioned to illustrate the cover for the game. "I had done a lot of illustration, some super hero comics for Marvel, was finishing up designing characters on the Ed Grimley show at Colossal Pictures and had done one Sam & Max comic. A friend recommended me to LucasFilm Games because he liked that comic book." explains Steve Purcell regarding his hiring for the firm. "I was excited to go to work at Skywalker Ranch but about a week after I was hired, the game I was working on was cancelled. Fortunately they needed a painting for the *Zak McKracken* cover and I got called back in."

Regarding the inspirations behind *Zak McKracken*, David Fox wanted to write a game with "'New Age' concepts (spirituality, Karma, alien history, etc.), and so I spent a few days brainstorming with a well-known spiritual author, David Spangler. He had a great sense of humour and didn't take all the spirituality stuff too seriously. So we came up with a list of every thing we could think of that might fit into the game, and tried to get it all in. I remember that David suggested the Face on Mars, Mt. Ranier (he lives near Seattle), Mayan ruins, etc." While names of the females came from designer's wives and girlfriends, Zak's naming was a little more random. "We used a local phone book and kept looking at names until we found one we liked. No, there wasn't a Zak McKracken listed – we just pulled a first and last name that worked."

As *Zak McKracken* used the next version of the already developed SCUMM interface, which was constantly tweaked by Ron Gilbert, the game took only nine months to complete from initial design to the final version. One of the scriptors, Matthew Kane was also responsible for coding the music, with the original composition available at http://www.lamaweb.com/zak/.

> "THE GROUP WAS VERY SMALL AND EVERYONE WAS AMAZINGLY SMART. THE GAME'S INDUSTRY WAS STILL VERY YOUNG, AND THERE WERE NO RULES" RON GILBERT



» The follow-up to *X-Wing* was a massive improvement



Working at LucasArts in the early days was a magical experience for the team.

"When I started we were in a rustic back building next to a creek on Skywalker Ranch – beautiful stone fireplaces and *Star Wars* originals hanging on the walls. We spent a lot of time outside, hiking through the hills, playing softball, swimming in Lake Ewok (I kid you not). We'd have to stay late to make up all the hours we had spent goofing around during the workday. It was like summer camp." recalls Steve Purcell. The small team size and lack of interference from George Lucas also played a big part.

"The group was very small, around 10 people and everyone was amazingly smart. The game's industry was still very young, and there were no rules. Every day you would be doing something new that no one had done before." comments Ron Gilbert.

"George really didn't have a lot of personal interest in games, so he didn't visit very often. That made us one of the only groups in the company that could decide its own creative direction. We also felt a tremendous responsibility to live up to the standards of the *Star Wars* films, and knew what kinds of expectations were out there for our games," says Fox. "I started the year after *Return Of The Jedi* came out, shortly before the release of the second *Indiana Jones* movie," remembers Noah Falstien "and LucasFilm was one of the coolest places in the world to be."

Thanks to Ron Gilbert, Steve Purcell, David Fox and Noah Falstein for the interviews and additional help with the article.

Credit to www.lemon64.com and www.lucasarts.com for some of the screenshots and imagery. **Part two next month**

SOFTOGRAPHY
1984-1996

1984
Ballblazer (Atari 5200, Atari 800)
Rescue On Fractalus! (Atari 5200, Atari 800)

1985
Koronis Rift (C64, Atari 800)
The Eidolon (C64, Atari 800)

1986
The Labyrinth (C64, Apple II, MSX)
PHM Pegasus (C64, PC, Apple II)
Habitat (C64, FM Towns)

1987
Strike Fleet (PC, C64, Apple II)
Maniac Mansion (C64, Amiga, Atari ST, PC, Apple II, NES)

1988
Battlehawk 1942 (PC, Amiga, Atari ST)
Zak McKracken And The Alien Mindbenders (C64, PC, Amiga, Atari ST, FM Towns, Apple II)

1989
Their Finest Hour: Battle Of The Britains (PC, Amiga, Atari ST)
Pipe Dreams/Pipe Mania (PC, MAC, Apple II, Amiga, Atari ST, C64)
Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade – The Graphic Adventure (PC, Amiga, Atari ST, Mac, FM Towns, CDTV)
Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade – The Action Game (PC, Amiga, Atari ST, C64, Spectrum, GameBoy, NES, MD, SMS)

1990
Loom (PC, Amiga, Atari ST, Mac, PC CD ROM, Super CD)
The Secret Of Monkey Island (PC, Amiga, Atari ST, Mac, PC CD-ROM, CDTV, Sega CD)
Nightshift (PC, Amiga, Atari ST, Mac)

1991
Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge (PC, Amiga, Color Macintosh)
Star Wars (NES)
The Empire Strikes Back (NES)
Secret Weapons Of The Luftwaffe (PC, PC CD-ROM)
Loom (FM Towns)

1992
Loom (CDTV, Turbographx 16, PC Engine)
Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis Action game
Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis Graphic Adventure (PC, Amiga, Colour Macintosh, PC CD-ROM)
Super Star Wars (SNES)
Defenders of Dynatron City (NES)

1993
Maniac Mansion II: Day Of The Tentacle (PC, PC CD-ROM, Mac CD-ROM)
Sam and Max: Hit the Road (PC, PC CD-ROM, Mac CD-ROM)
Super Empire Strikes Back (SNES)
Star Wars: X-Wing (PC, PC CD ROM, Mac CD-ROM)
Star Wars: Rebel Assault (PC CD ROM, Sega CD, Mac CDROM, 3DO)
Zombies Ate My Neighbours (SNES, MD)

1994
Super Return Of The Jedi (PC, SNES, Game Boy)
Star Wars Screen Entertainment (PC)
Ghoul Patrol (SNES)
TIE Fighter (PC)
Cadillac's and Dinosaurs (PC CD ROM)

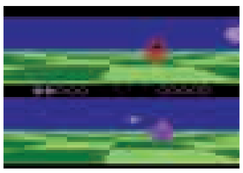
1995
Full Throttle (PC CD-ROM, Mac CD)
The Dig (PC CD-ROM, Mac CD)
Star Wars Dark Forces (PC, PC CD-ROM, Mac CD, PlayStation)
Star Wars Rebel Assault® II – The Hidden Empire (PlayStation, PC CD-ROM, PC, Mac CD)
Big Sky Trooper (SNES)
Metal Warriors (SNES)
Indiana Jones Greatest Adventures (PC)

1996
Star Wars: Shadows Of The Empire (Nintendo 64, PC)
Star Wars: Rebel Assault II: The Hidden Empire (PC)
Indiana Jones® And His Desktop Adventures (PC, PC-CD ROM, Mac)
Afterlife (PC CD-ROM, Mac CD)
Mortimer® And The Riddles Of The Medallion (PC, Mac CD)
Neo Hunter: Calia 2095 (PC)

Timeline

There are far too many LucasArts games to list on two pages, so here's a look at some of the highs and lows.

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BALLBLAZER

Amstrad CPC, Apple II, Atari 5200, Atari 7800, Atari 8-bit, Commodore 64, MSX, ZX Spectrum

Wonderfully simple in concept, *Ballblazer* requires you to do little more than shoot a ball through the opposing player's goal posts. Taking control of a hi-tech hovercraft you use blasts of air to score goals or steal the ball from your rival. Convincing 3D visuals and addictive gameplay make *Ballblazer* one of LucasArts most likeable games.

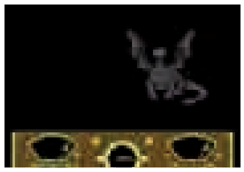


RESCUE ON FRACTALUS!

Amstrad CPC, Apple II, Atari 8-bit, Atari 5200, Commodore 64, TRS-80 CoCo, ZX Spectrum

Fly down to Fractalus' surface and rescue the stranded pilots whilst protecting yourself from laser-spewing bases and deadly flying saucers. The fractally generated landscapes still look gorgeous and LucasArts has struck a nice balance between arcade action and all out simulation. A thoroughly engrossing experience.

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THE EIDOLON

Amstrad CPC, Apple II, Atari 8-bit, Commodore 64, MSX, ZX Spectrum

A superb first-person adventure that has you taking control of the titular Eidolon and using it to explore a mysterious dark cavern. Different coloured fireballs are littered throughout the cave system and must be used to defeat the game's many monsters, including some impressively huge dragons. Great stuff.



KORONIS RIFT

Amstrad CPC, Apple II, Atari 8-bit, Commodore 64, MSX, TRS-80 CoCo, ZX Spectrum

As with *The Eidolon, Koronis Rift* was the second LucasArts game to use fractal technology to create a unique playing area that appeared light years ahead of its time. It was also one of the few LucasArts games to feature different versions of the game on one disk, with the C64 being on while side while the Atari 800 was on the other.



MANIAC MANSION

Amiga, Apple II, Atari ST, Commodore 64, DOS, NES

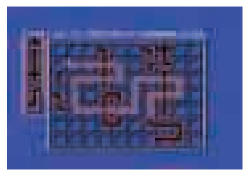
Created by the legendary Ron Gilbert, *Maniac Mansion* was the first title to use LucasArts SCUMM (Script Creation Utility for *Maniac Mansion*) and is a hilarious graphic adventure featuring a range of oddball characters. While it initially appeared on the Commodore 64, the versatility of SCUMM meant it was soon ported to other platforms.



ZAK MCKRAKEN AND THE ALIEN MINDBENDERS

Amiga, Apple II, Atari ST, Commodore 64, DOS

Zak McKraken was originally intended to be a more serious adventure that looked into alien colonisation and was inspired by project leader David Fox's time with new age writer David Spangler. Luckily, Ron Gilbert was able to persuade Fox to take a more comedic route and the end result is a worthy (though not quite as funny) follow up to *Maniac Mansion*.



PIPE MANIA

Amiga, Amstrad CPC, Apple II, Atari ST, Commodore 64, DOS, Game Boy, Macintosh, NES, Windows, ZX Spectrum

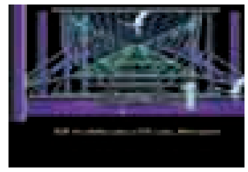
Fun puzzler that sees you trying to frantically construct a pipeline in order to contain the slime that slowly threatens to spill forth from the mouthpiece of your creation. Once the slime has passed through a set number of sections you'll move on to the next, tougher stage. Whilst fairly complex when compared to titles such as *Tetris*, it remains utterly charming to play.



NIGHT SHIFT

Amiga, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST, Commodore 64, DOS, ZX Spectrum

Fun platform/puzzler that sees you in charge of a huge toy machine that makes everything from dolls to Stormtroopers (this is a LucasArts game after all). The aim of the game is to frantically run around the huge machine (which is several screens high) and keep it going.



LOOM

Amiga, Atari ST, DOS, Macintosh, TurboGrafx CD

LucasArts' fourth title to use its SCUMM engine was *Loom*, a fantastical adventure that was quite a departure from its more light-hearted peers. No surprise really, as *Loom* was helmed by Brian Moriarty, an ex staff member of RPG legends Infocom. A challenging adventure that features beautifully drawn locations (and thanks to a CD ROM version) a fantastic soundtrack.



THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND

Amiga, Atari ST, DOS, Macintosh, Mega CD

Quite simply one of LucasArts' finest hours. Guybrush Threepwood's quest to become a fearsome pirate is filled with typical LucasArts lunacy; plenty of 'nudge, nudge, wink, wink' references, insults, sword fighting and some extremely well thought out puzzles. Another startling piece of work from the legendary Ron Gilbert, *Monkey Island* is also notable for being the first project that Tim Schafer worked on. A superb adventure.

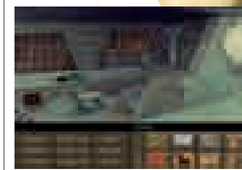


MONKEY ISLAND 2: LECHUCK'S REVENGE

Amiga, DOS, Macintosh

Excellent sequel that is seen by many to be one of LucasArts finest adventure games, and when you consider its prestigious company that's high praise indeed. Threepwood's second adventure features far slicker visuals than its predecessor, far more jokes and plenty of head-scratching puzzles. Our only real annoyance with *Monkey Island 2* is its "Shaggy Dog" style ending. Other than that it's pure gold.

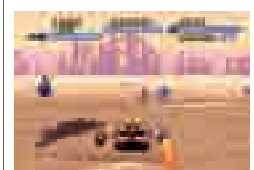
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INDIANA JONES AND THE FATE OF ATLANTIS

Amiga, DOS, Macintosh

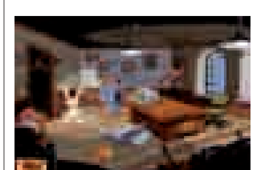
Quite simply the best *Indiana Jones* game money can buy and a perfect use of the licence. What made *Fate Of Atlantis* stand out from other LucasArts adventures was the opportunity to choose three distinct playing styles: Wits (puzzles), Fists (plenty of fisticuffs) and Team (that saw you pairing up with a female protagonist). Throw in a superb storyline and plenty of Indy idiosyncrasies and you have yet another hit.



SUPER STAR WARS

SNES

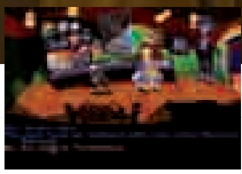
Excellent run-'n-gun title that not only manages to capture all the essence of the *Star Wars* universe, but also turned out to be a bloody good SNES game as well. With superb visuals (including plenty of cool Mode 7 effects), varied gameplay and a storming soundtrack, *Super Star Wars* is unmissable.



SAM & MAX HIT THE ROAD

DOS Macintosh

Steve Purcell's wonderful tale of a sleuthing dog and his psychotic rabbit sidekick is quite possible the funniest adventure game to ever spill forth from LucasArts. Featuring a wicked sense of humour, fantastic characters and plenty of sly digs at America *Sam & Max Hit The Road* is another highlight in LucasArts' adventure crown and shouldn't be missed under any circumstances. None at all!



DAY OF THE TENTACLE

DOS, Macintosh

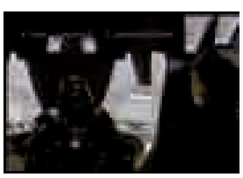
Excellent sequel to *Maniac Mansion* and the first LucasArts adventure to be helmed by Tim Schafer (with able support from Dave Grossman). Set five years after the events in the original game, *Day Of The Tentacle* is another quirky adventure that uses time travel for many of its puzzles. As always the soundtrack is superb, but like other LucasArts adventures you'll need the CD-ROM version for the full experience.



ZOMBIES ATE MY NEIGHBOURS

Mega Drive, SNES

Think *Gauntlet*, but with better-designed maps, charming lead characters and zombies. Oh, and vampires, werewolfs, giant babies. You get the idea… LucasArts' quirky title is a riot thanks to its humorously animated monsters, blatant tongue-in-cheek plugs to various B-Movies and clever gameplay. Rescuing civilians has never been so much fun.

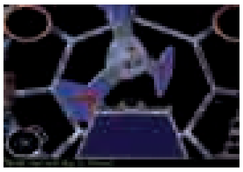


STAR WARS REBEL ASSAULT

3DO, DOS, Macintosh, Mega CD

While *Rebel Assault* boasted extensive use of full motion video directly taken from the *Star Wars* films the pre-rendered environments that LucasArts had created didn't make for a fun game. The on-rails action was extremely limited and became boring very quickly. Avoid the sequel as well.

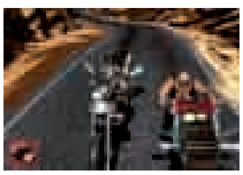
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STAR WARS: TIE FIGHTER

DOS, Windows

Impressive follow up to *X-Wing* that not only greatly improved the games visuals but also enabled you to play as the Empire. Yay. As well as spiffy new "Gouraud Shading" *Tie Fighter* also boasted a three-dimensional HUD, flight dialogue, mission logs and plenty of other extras to keep would-be pilots fully immersed in the *Star Wars* universe.



FULL THROTTLE

DOS, Macintosh, Windows

Great looking adventure from Tim Schafer and the tenth game to use LucasArts' fabled SCUMM engine. Despite having an extremely loyal following, and being the first computer game to use actors from SAG many gamers felt short-changed by *Full Throttle*'s pitiful length. Ignore this oversight and just revel in the greatness of Schafer.

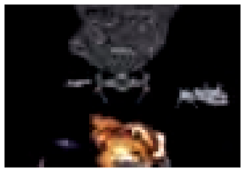


STAR WARS: DARK FORCES

DOS, Macintosh, PlayStation

The first official *Star Wars* first-person shooter is pretty good fun and finally proved what we had always known – shooting Stormtroopers is fun. *Dark Forces* apparently came to fruition after LucasArts was reportedly fed up with the many unofficial *Star Wars* wads that had been created for Id's *Doom*.

1 9 9 4 - 5



STAR WARS: X-WING VS TIE FIGHTER

Windows

Although it sported high-resolution visuals, a stunning soundtrack and the ability to use a joystick, *X-Wing Vs Tie Fighter* had a somewhat mixed response. Being predominately a multi-player experience meant that the lengthy storylines and varied scenarios that had proved so popular in the first two games were no longer included. Luckily, an expansion disc called Balance Of Power readdressed many of the game's problems.

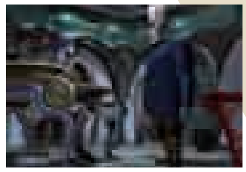


STAR WARS: MASTERS OF TERÅ KÅSI

PlayStation

While we can understand why LucasArts would want to create a beat-'em-up where protagonists can use lightsabers, having the likes of Han Solo and Boba Fett kicking the crap out of each other is the shittest of shit ideas. Anywhere. Ever. One of the worst *Star Wars* games we've played.

1 9 9 7



GRIM FANDANGO

Windows

Tim Schafer's follow-up to *Grim Fandango* is generally considered to be Tim Schafer's finest moment and is a stunning adventure that still impresses today. Dispensing with the by then ageing SCUMM engine, *Fandango*'s reliance on 3D visuals and its innovative control system proved to be both its blessing and curse. Loved by critics, but ignored but the majority of the general public *Fandango* proved to be LucasArts' last great adventure.



INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE

Game Boy Color, Nintendo 64, Windows

Indiana Jones is back, but this time he's in 3D (well, at least he is on the N64 and Windows). Ironically, despite being a solid 3D adventure, *Infernal Machine* came under a lot of flak as it was considered to be nothing more than a *Tomb Raider* rip-off. And what was the inspiration for *Lara Croft* we ask…



ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND

Macintosh, PlayStation 2, Windows

Using an upgraded version of *Grim Fandango*'s GrimE engine, *Escape From Monkey Island* is the last game in the *Monkey Island* franchise. Sadly, it also turned out to be the least-loved game in the series, with many fans upset by its 3D visuals, sombre atmosphere and new interface. It's actually quite an enjoyable romp, but it does pale in significance when placed next to the first two games.



GLADIUS

GameCube, PlayStation 2, Xbox

Kudos to LucasArts. Rather then simply use its *Star Wars* licence to peddle *Gladius* to the masses, it instead decided to set its new game in a world of Romans and barbarians. Sadly the gamble didn't pay off, and while *Gladius* is an interesting take on the SRPG genre its sales left a lot to be desired.



STAR WARS GALAXIES: AN EMPIRE DIVIDED

Windows

The ultimate fix for *Star Wars* fans everywhere. Buy *Star Wars Galaxies* and live out your life as pretty much whatever character and race that you fancy. Despite its licence, *Galaxies* hasn't cornered the market as many expected, with the majority of MMORPG fans being seemingly content to idle away their lives in *World Of Warcraft*.

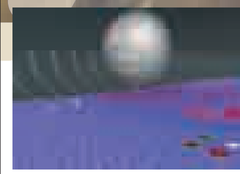


STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC

Macintosh, Windows, Xbox

When you're working on the first RPG to be set in the *Star Wars* universe you know you're going to be under all sorts of pressure. Luckily, Bioware are old hands at the RPG lark (it had massive success with its *Baldur's Gate* titles) and was able to create an utterly absorbing RPG that captured the *Star Wars* licence to perfection.

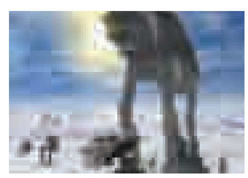
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BEN'S GAME

Windows

Ben's Game is a piece of freeware that was created by Ben Duskin, while he was in remission from leukaemia. Under the 'Make a Wish' foundation, Ben's wish to create a videogame that would be helpful for other children that suffered from cancer was granted by LucasArts and one of its software engineers, one Eric Johnston. The game can be downloaded from http://www.makewish.org/site/pp.asp?c=cvLRKaO4E&b=64401.



STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT

Macintosh, PlayStation 2, Windows, Xbox

Think *Battle Front*, but with Stormtroopers, Ewoks, Rebels, Wookiees, blasters and lightsabers. It may have borrowed heavily from EA's classic franchise, but *Battlefront* contained more than enough mechanics to ensure it gained massive popularity with the *Star Wars* community. A sequel arrived a year later and enabled players to finally control Jedis and other powerful characters.

2 0 0 4

CYBERNOID

FROM THE GREAT RAFFAELE



- » **PUBLISHER:** HEWSON
- » **RELEASED:** 1988
- » **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** AMSTRAD CPC 464
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £1+

HISTORY

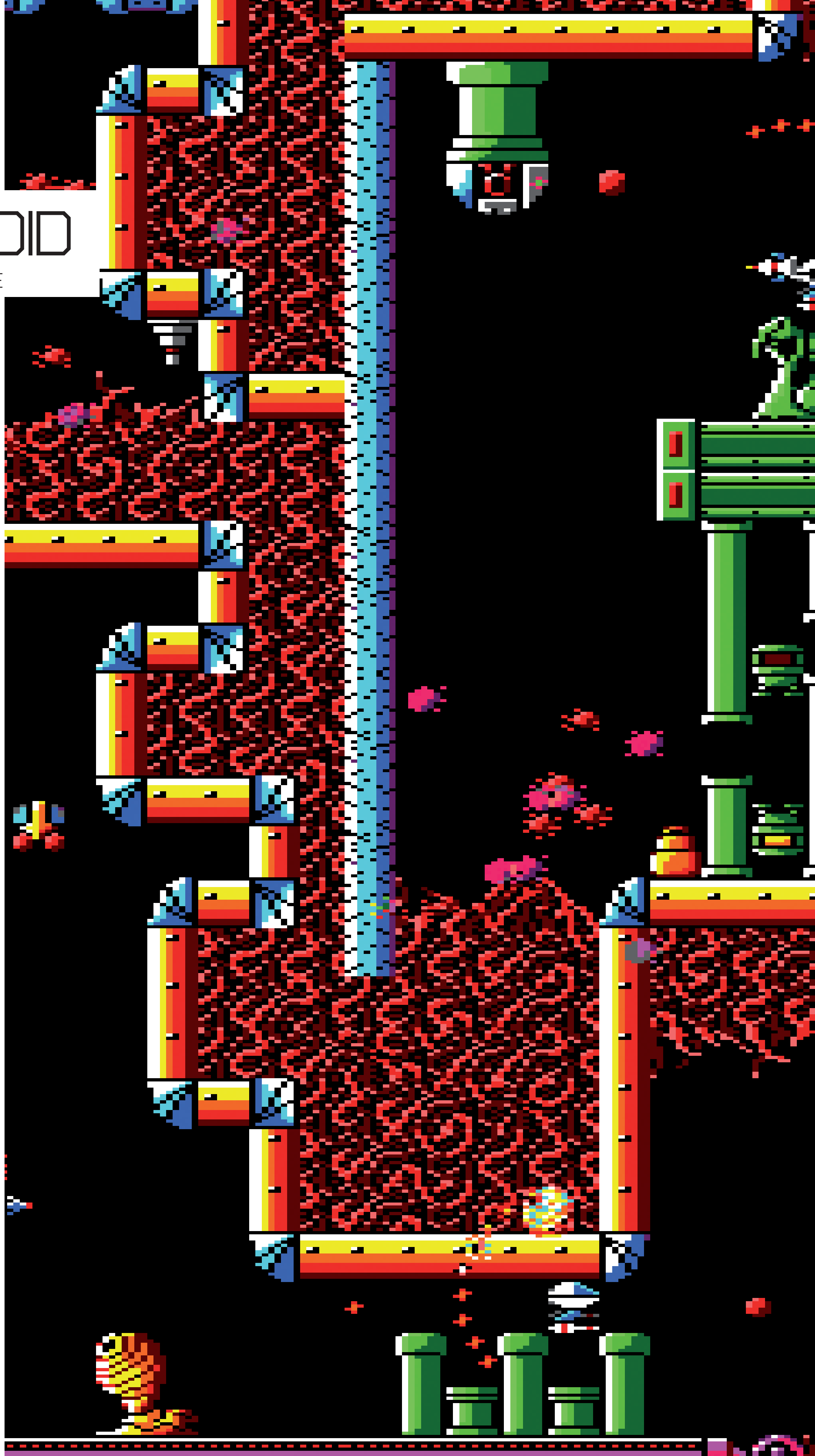


For me, Raffaele Cecco is a genius. Not only is he one of the few programmers to really make the CPC sing – no shoddy Spectrum ports here thank you very much – he was also rather adept at blending two totally unrelated genres into a challenging (some would say too challenging) new game.

Cybernoid actually goes one step further, for while it perfectly blends both shooting and puzzle elements, Cecco also found time to throw the odd nod to the platform genre as well. The end result is a kooky blend of hardcore shooting and puzzle-solving, which, while unmercifully tough (hell, even unfair at times), still manages to charm today.

Taking control of your Cybernoid fighter, the aim of the game is relatively straightforward: make your way through some elaborate mazes, while avoiding or destroying the game's many enemies and grabbing as much loot as you can. As with blasters such as *Thrust* and *Asteroids*, your Cybernoid craft's thrust is controlled by just one button: keep it held down to rise, and take your finger off to descend. Whilst not as elegant as the mechanics seen in the aforementioned games, it's perfectly adequate for Cecco's title and after a bit of perseverance you'll soon be well on your way to obtaining the booty quota that's needed for the end of each stage.

Although *Cybernoid* is at heart a straightforward shooter, many of the screens require a fair amount of cerebral planning to get through (the puzzle elements) and some painful, pixel-perfect gaps and timing (the platform elements) to squeeze through. Returning to Cecco's colourful vision – which received a sequel in the same year – reveals that flying through the labyrinth-like levels can still provoke gasps of wonderment (it really is a beautiful game) and screams of frustration when an enemy suddenly appears on top of you as you try and exit a screen. Even so, there's still something strangely hypnotic about *Cybernoid*. Maybe it's that insanely catchy title tune…





SEGA MEGA DRIVE

THE MEGA DRIVE WAS SEGA'S FIRST SUCCESSFUL CONSOLE. SOME ARGUE IT WAS ALSO ITS LAST, HAILING A BELLEROPHON STYLED RISE AND FALL. IT REPRESENTS SO MANY THINGS, TO SO MANY PEOPLE, FOR SO MANY REASONS. JOHN SZCZEPANIAK TRIES TO CAPTURE SOME ESSENCE OF WHAT IT ALL MEANT.

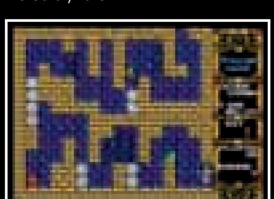


Modem Wars

Sega dabbled in modem usage for the Mega Drive. Nagumo-san explained, "It was called Mega-Modem, whose sales date was November 3, 1990. It is a modem unit for Mega Drive that enabled online game communication. It used analogue lines and its connection speed was 1,200bps. The service named 'Game Toshokan' enabled downloading of games, delivery of Sega-related news and online matches."

Records vary wildly on how many games utilised online play (one source stating six).

We only found solid confirmation regarding *TEL TEL Mah-Jong* and Stadium titles. More interestingly was the 'Game Toshokan', which allowed downloading of games like *Phantasy Star* text adventures, *Pyramid Magic* and *Flicky* to a special cartridge. Closing in 1993, fans worried the online-only games would be forever lost. Luckily in 1994 there were two Mega-CD compilations, *Sega Games Can Vol 1* and *2*, which included nearly all-available titles. Prized among *Phantasy Star* collectors, these are incredibly rare.





Nintendo's fate has often been intertwined with the Mega Drive system. It has long had a history of benefiting from Sega in one form or another, often due to the direct competitive challenge it posed. The SNES would have been nothing without the MD; the reverse is also true. It was the Mega Drive that pushed Nintendo's into updating its aged NES hardware, and it was also the Mega Drive that changed the market forever, cutting a trail towards the situation today. It is undeniably one of the most important pieces of hardware in gaming history. So it should have come as no surprise to find that MD games would support Nintendo's soon-to-be-released Wii system. In a moment of irony, it must be noted that Sega had already dabbled in downloadable MD games with The Sega Channel, making its announcement quite apt. The decision was obvious. Later Sega systems would prove difficult, technically, and also the MD was far more successful than the Master System. As will be shown, the MD can be credited for many things – it was a magical high Sega never again reached.

The Japanese debut was October 29, 1988. The widespread American release was less than a year later in 1989, while the United Kingdom had to wait roughly another year before it arrived in November 1990. To fully understand the importance of the Mega Drive's launch, you need to know what the international climate was like during the decadent Eighties.

Sega had already entered the console fray previously, with the successive releases of its SG-1000 Mark I, II and III systems in Japan (1981-1985), the 3rd model of which was redesigned as the Master System for Western countries. To be bluntly honest, despite it being technically superior to the Famicom/NES, it was a commercial failure that never gained more than a 5% market share. Only in Brazil was it able to officially eclipse Nintendo's 8-bit hardware. Throughout the mid-to-late Eighties Japan's console market was controlled almost entirely by the Famicom, which was popular beyond description. America was gripped by the NES, again with near total market dominance. The NES was also available in Europe and the UK, though Britannia was more enamoured with 8-bit micros than high-priced consoles.

In 1987 Hudson Soft and NEC jointly released the PC-Engine against the Famicom, two years later redesigning and releasing it in America as the TurboGrafx 16. When Sega decided to position its MD as a third competitor, the odds must have seemed impossibly high. According to David Sheff, Hiroshi Yamauchi dismissed Sega as not being a threat. Yamauchi was more concerned with NEC, which was investing roughly $3.7 billion into R&D, an amount greater than Nintendo's then annual sales. Sega meanwhile was only a $700 million company, and one founded by an American. As an underdog scrapping against NEC for second place, Sega and its MD was underestimated,

Year Released: Japan: 1988 USA: 1989 UK: 1990

Original Price: Japan: 21,000 Yen USA: $189.99 UK: £189.99

Buy it now for: £10+ with games

Associated Magazines: Beep! Megadrive, Mega Drive Fan, GameFan, Mean Machines, Sega Visions Magazine

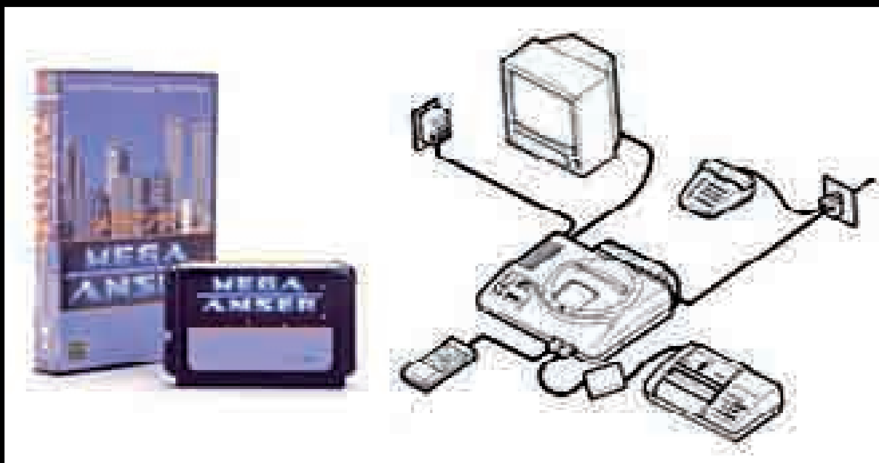
Why the Mega Drive was great… The Mega Drive ushered in the 16-bit era; some say the last golden era of gaming. It was a special kind of scene to be a part of. No explanation, no mix of words or screenshots or memories can ever touch that sense of knowing, that you were there, playing those great games during that point in time. Though this age has sadly passed, newcomers still need to understand.



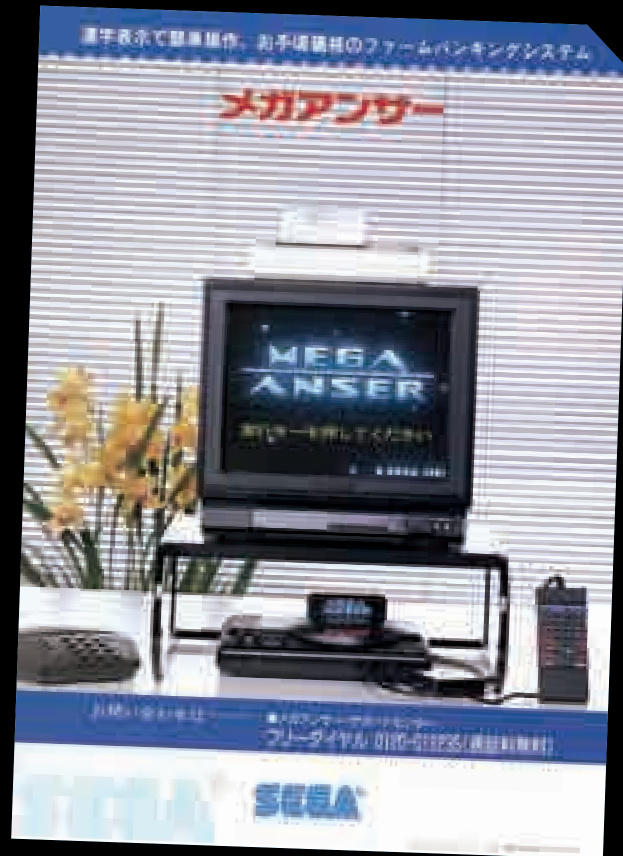




SEGA MEGA DRIVE



» **Above and right:** For ultimate collectors and those wanting to use the Mega Drive for online banking: the Sega Mega Anser (sic)



"ATARI WAS OFFERED THE GENESIS AND JACK TRAMIEL TURNED IT DOWN. JACK THOUGHT THE DEAL WAS TOO EXPENSIVE" MICHAEL KATZ

viewed by the industry itself as the weaker of the two. Retro Gamer spoke with Mr. Nagumo, the "Team Manager of SOJ CS Product PR", and asked many, many questions, few of them answered. When asked if, due to the impossible odds stacked against them, Sega had considered becoming a developer for either the Famicom or PC Engine, his answer was blunt. "No, we didn't."

Even so, Sega staff were curious about the Famicom. In two separate interviews (GameWeek and TNL) Yuji Naka admitted to making Famicom games run on the MD. His comments, amalgamated, were, "Oh my. [laughs] How do you people know about that one? Well yeah, actually I did. I once made a Famicom emulator for the Mega Drive. It was something fun to amuse myself with at the time. I couldn't play every game with it. But it was fun to call people over and show them Mario running around on a Mega Drive."

ORIGINS OF GENESIS

Sega's main source of profit during the Eighties was its hugely popular arcade games, like Yu Suzuki's *Space Harrier* and *Hang On*. To beat the competition the head of Sega, Hayao Nakayama, decided to create the first true arcade home system. He worked in secret with Hideki Sato, modifying Sega's System-16 hardware – the same hardware that powered arcade versions of *Shinobi* and *Altered Beast*. This would have allowed superior visuals and audio, leagues ahead of the competition. It would also allow for easier, more accurate arcade ports (which gamers would be familiar with), and therefore plenty of games.

The new console had to be scaled down from the System-16, in terms of processor speed and available on-screen colours, but Hideki Sato planned ahead and included some extras. It was backwards-compatible with the Master System (using the Power Base Converter), and it was also designed with the future potential to use a mouse, keyboard, 2-inch floppy disk drive, modem, graphics tablet, and printer. He even considered the possibility of someday attaching a CD drive.

Beep!, a multiformat Japanese mag, first announced the system in June 1988 alongside an early prototype drawing, tentatively calling it the Sega Mark V (following on from previous names). The internal project meanwhile was called Mk-1601, but Sega wanted something stronger for the launch. It went through 300 different proposals, before finally settling on Mega Drive.

Disappointingly the Japanese launch was very understated. Their penchant for lengthy, mind-boggling queuing in Akihabara had been forgotten; there were no such queues for the MD! Supply and publicity had been well organised, but the machine was overshadowed by *Super Mario Bros 3*, released just one week earlier. Luckily magazines



Hybrid Children

A sign of the Mega Drive's popularity is the number of variations that exist. Beyond your standard models, there was the JVC Wondermega (Xeye in America), which combined MD and Mega-CD. Then there was the much smaller combined Multi-Mega (CDX in America), doubling as a portable CD player. Following this musical theme, there was the Aiwa CSD-GM1, combining the MD/MCD with a portable "Boom Box" radio. From CD to LD, Sega's champion was also included with Pioneer's Laseractive. MSX fans will be interested to know it was integrated into the AX-330 and AX-990 models, for Arabic distribution in Kuiwait and Yemen. Computer implementation didn't end there, since it was also hybridised into the Sega TeraDrive, a Japanese home computer. Meanwhile, the Western equivalent was the Amstrad Mega PC (see buyer's guide). Then there was the portable Nomad, and the Mega Jet, which was used by Japan Airlines. And the above doesn't even take into account the many bootleg clones about!





» Most Mega Jets being sold come from an initial shipment hijacked by Indonesian sea-pirates. Their distribution was organised by underground collectors



» A young Hideki Sato working on a prototype Mega Drive; he was the main designer behind it





» There are countless unlicensed Chinese (and Korean) games, like *Barver Battle Saga – The Space Fighter*. It was renamed *Final Fantasy* when translated into Russian



» Above and below: By using the Power Base Converter, the Mega Drive could play Sega's back-catalogue of Master System games



like Famitsu and Beep! gave it positive coverage, and so a small but loyal following began. Reportedly 400,000 units were shipped in the first year.

Despite the low uptake in Japan, Sega went on to pursue highly risky and quite odd endeavours – bad for profits, great for collectors. Along with a gaming modem (see box-out), Sega created an online banking system for Nagoya Bank. The result was the Mega Anser (sic), complete with modem, numerical keypad, and grossly overpriced 'Mega Printer'. Sega also adapted the MD for arcade use, despite it already being based on the System-16 architecture. The results were the System C-2 board, and also the timed MegaTech and then MegaPlay systems; roughly, these three had a combined total of 80 games developed. Japan also received the rarest version of *Tetris* ever, and some sublime exclusive RPGs like *Rent-A-Hero* and *King Colossus* (both fan-translated).

But Japan was never what the Mega Drive was about. Success lay in the USA and Europe. Sega had the fight of its life ahead, and it would take not only gutsy determination to succeed, but also a damned excellent roster of games, and luck. Sega clearly had just enough of these, since it nearly conquered the industry.

GLOBALLY GAMED

To bolster the inside information available to Retro Gamer, Ken Horowitz of Sega-16.com kindly donated interviews he conducted with industry figures. One such individual was Michael Katz, former head of Sega's American branch, who presided over the Genesis' initial sales year. Katz explained the early days. "I arrived one month after Genesis launched. The company was small (under 50 people). They had gone through 2-3 Presidents (Gene Lipkin, Bruce Lowery) in the "Master System" days. Dave Rosen – Vice Chairman of Sega (and original founder), was overseeing the running of the company. I reported to him and Nakayama in Japan. Sega was basically a distribution company in the US. Hardware and software development came from Japan. I initially had to deal with keeping employees happy, determining the quality of the staff and getting into the job of building the Sega vs Nintendo juggernaut." Arriving after the American launch, Katz wasn't aware of the details surrounding the name change from Mega Drive to Genesis. Consensus states it was due to a trademark dispute. The facts are blurred, but point possibly to a US manufacturer of storage devices called Mega Drive Systems Inc.

We also questioned Katz ourselves, and he revealed a fascinating anecdote from before the Genesis launch. "I will tell you that Atari was offered the Genesis (when I was President of Atari Games Division) and Jack Tramiel turned it down. It would have gotten Atari back in the game with a 16-Bit system. I attended the meeting at Atari, when Dave Rosen (Sega Chairman) visited us (Jack and I) and made the offer. Jack thought the deal was too expensive, and he was more interested in the Atari ST computer project." The system filtering into America and Europe raises an important question for importers. Why the deplorable need for regional lockout? Katz admitted he had no control over it in America, "Lockout decisions were made in Japan. The Sega Japan International VP handled international sales and marketing." Never knowing when to quit, Retro Gamer pushed Japan's PR man into a corner until he commented. As Nagumo puts it, "We implemented the security regionally to prevent game software being imported due to gaps of sales time between regions." As he wipes the sweat from his brow, we jovially comment that thankfully it wasn't successful. Enterprising young hackers soon bypassed the security with special contraptions, and later, easy methods for modifying the hardware were devised.



» The rarest most expensive version of *Tetris*. Ever. You need underground contacts and plenty of money to join this elite 'owners club'

IF FORCED TO SUMMARISE WHY THE MD IS SUCH A BLOODY FANTASTIC SLAB OF BLACK PLASTIC, IT'S BECAUSE IT'S ALL THINGS TO ALL GAMERS



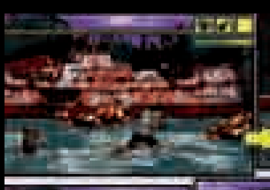
SEGA MEGA DRIVE



Channel Control
The Mega Drive has so many unusual anecdotes you need a hundred box-outs like this. With the announcement of downloadable MD games for Wii, we're highlighting the revolutionary Sega Channel.

Speaking with Nagumo-san again, we hoped for a pride filled statement that championed this pioneering achievement. His answer was somewhat subdued, "It was a cable television service in the US from which videogames could be downloaded. We started the service in cooperation with Telecommunications, Inc. One could play his favourite games as much as he liked at a fixed amount every month. We also had the same services in cooperation with regional cable televisions in Japan."

From 1993 games were made available for download (divided by genre), at a cost of $12.95 per month. Games were rotated every few weeks, encompassing nearly the entire library, plus a few unreleased titles and imports! They could be played indefinitely, but lasted only while the system was turned on.



» With an unprecedented comic book styling, *Comix Zone* was one of many exclusive titles that made the MD worth owning. An astoundingly good brawler

IT WAS A SYSTEM WHERE THE ALLURE WAS BORN NOT ONLY OF THE HARDWARE AND GAMES, BUT THE MAGAZINES, PLAYGROUND ARGUMENTS, CLIMATE, AND POLITICS OF THE TIME

Underground importing certainly didn't harm international sales. The MD is officially Sega's highest selling system. International figures are estimated to be between 30 and 35 million units, of which only 10% is attributed to Japan. Sega was determined to achieve those higher sales abroad; it demanded the American branch chant the Japanese word "HYAKUMANDAI" (that's "one-million" in English), in order to encourage sales. Katz elaborated, "The 'one million units' chant was representative of a goal set by Sega Japan. Did they just pluck the number out of thin air? I don't know. I think they thought that if we sold a million units in the first year that would make a big statement. They disregarded Nintendo's position and the fact that all key retailers would have to come on board immediately to hit the number, and also the need for a substantial software library from the get-go." Despite the daily chanting, sales only reached halfway. Katz went on, "We sold about 500K units — which I considered damn good — because Genesis was new, didn't have a large software library initially, and the Nintendo franchise was hard to crack."

In America it seemed Nintendo was unstoppable, and that was indeed its intention. It used some very unorthodox methods to maintain superiority. Stores were bullied into not carrying Sega products, and developers were forced to sign strict licensing agreements stating they'd only develop for Nintendo. But everyone loves seeing a tyrant deposed and a colossus fall, and so various developers began thinking of the Mega Drive as a serious, more profitable alternative. Popular companies like Namco changed allegiance, while EA reverse-engineered the system before developing high quality exclusives. This all helped make Sega a tempting alternative for consumers.

But as Katz explained, Sega wasn't too pleased with EA. "Sega was unhappy about EA reverse-engineering Genesis. We were in the process of giving EA/Trip a 'sweetheart' deal, then we needed a *Joe Montana* game in a hurry (the game being developed for us by Media Genic was way behind schedule), so I asked Trip for a back up *Madden* football game. He gave us one and that assured him a low/royalty free deal on Genesis software. The first *Montana* game being a '*Madden* back up' from EA is a little known fact."

The MD's huge success, of course, came with the arrival of *Sonic The Hedgehog*, a phenomenal mascot that endures to this day. But the question that has to be pondered is what if *Sonic* had not been a hit and never had the success that it did? When asked, Nagumo playfully hinted at the possibility that Sega had other titles, besides *Sonic*, with which to take on Nintendo and *Mario*. "We had the marketing and promotion strategies using various titles at that time. *Sonic* was one of them that led to a big hit." Katz saw things differently. When asked about SOA's initial dislike of the Sonic character, "I certainly underestimated the potential of *Sonic*. Thank God there was good and sustained gameplay (critical in any game success). I know that I thought it was nuts, when we were going for targeted and widespread awareness in everything we did, for the Japanese to develop a game based on a type of character — a hedgehog — that no kid in the American 6-16 year-old demographic would have any familiarity with. We knew we needed a great "character action" game to put in the line up. We were hoping for a *Donkey Kong* type hit. When *Sonic* was so hot, it was decided to bundle it with Genesis (just as ColecoVision was bundled with *Donkey Kong* in 1981). If Sega didn't have *Sonic*, Genesis sales would probably have been less, but it's hard to say. I don't know if Sega Japan had a back up – I think not. Sega Japan was responsible for developing the character action genre. We were responsible in the US for developing sports games."

Despite his great effort and the success he achieved in those early years, Katz was replaced by Tom Kalinske in 1990. Most agree that any successes were a result of combined team efforts, but that Katz is often unfairly overlooked in favour of his successor. In past interviews, Kalinske explained how *Sonic* became the pack-in title. "After my first month as CEO, I told Mr. Nakayama, 'You have to get rid of *Altered Beast*, the title that's bundled with Genesis. It sounds like devil worship. We have to get the price down to $149, and we have to develop more American software.' The board spoke for two



» Japan's "Hyper Exciting Visual Game Magazine – Mega Drive Fan" was one of several dedicated publications

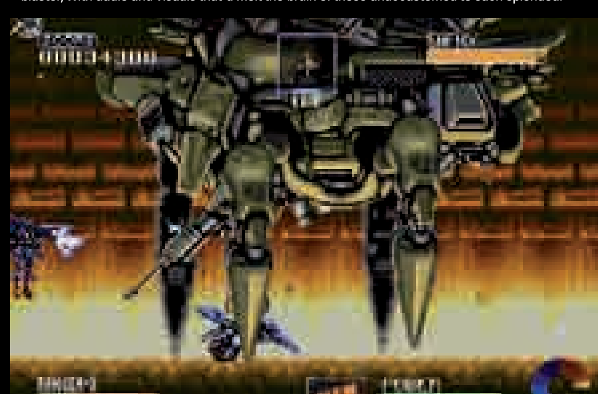


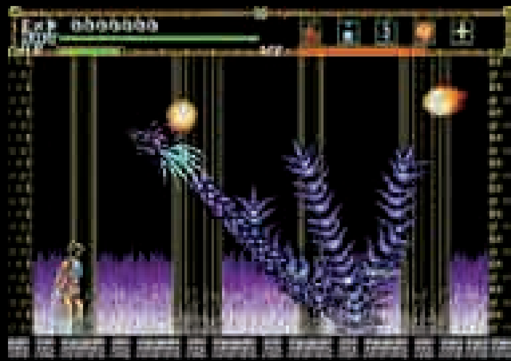


» **Top and bottom:** The anime influenced *Phantasy Star* series reached its peak with number 4. Few RPGs even come close to such magnificence



» **Above and below:** Smooth like liquid napalm, *Ranger X* by Gau Entertainment is a frenetic blaster, with audio and visuals that'd melt the brain of those unaccustomed to such splendour











» **Top and bottom:** *El Viento* and *Alisia Dragoon* are two very similar, very fun, and very Japanesey action-platformers

» **Top and bottom**: Konami knew how to love MD owners: Insane hyper-exaggerated action in *Contra*, and classic vampire hunting in *Castlevania*

hours in Japanese and I was just sitting there, not understanding a word. Finally Mr. Nakayama said, 'No one here agrees with anything you've said.' I thought mine was going to be the shortest career in the business. But as I was walking out, he said, 'But I hired you to make the decisions for Europe and the Americas, so go ahead and do it.'"

Sega eventually annihilated the TurboGrafx 16, and it was doing well against the NES, but the sleeping giant had awakened, and in 1990 Nintendo launched the SNES. The ultimate grudge match began, which even today, remains fresh in peoples' hearts and minds. Nintendo had on its side Japanese stalwarts Square and Enix, which made Sega's conquest of Japan nigh-on impossible, but it had already proven itself to be hip and cool in the West, and this is where it succeeded. Sega was out earlier, priced cheaply, and provided both what people wanted, and what its rivals weren't supplying.

Everyone deep down knew the MD couldn't outperform the SNES; it was the underdog in terms of graphical and audio power (it had a faster processor though). Developers had to work harder to get great results. This extra effort, and dare it be said, love, that went into the games, was very apparent – when they came up wth a graphical trick, or something unique, it showed. The Genesis had more mature software and was also advertised on adult TV like *Saturday Night Live*, further cementing its reputation as "doing what Nintendon't." But the big tipping of scales was *Mortal Kombat*. Sega's version had blood and included all arcade fatalities; Nintendo's version didn't. The atmosphere at the time was electric, and *Mortal Kombat* was a deciding factor for many people's purchases.

By 1992 Sega had 55% control of the market (up from around 8%), and by 1993 it had more than quadrupled its net worth (up to $3.6 billion). Sega had reached its peak. But over the coming years it became like a leper, withering as its valuable bits fell off. The golden era ended, but if you look with the right kind of eyes, you can almost see the high water mark, where that glorious wave broke, and finally rolled back.

If forced to summarise why the MD is such a bloody fantastic slab of black plastic, it's because it's all things to all gamers. It appealed to hardcore elitist collectors, since it was great to import for. Plenty of action games (like *Alien Soldier*, and the explosively magnificent *Ranger X*), with sturdy boxes protecting beautiful Japanese cover-art. When SNES-owning friends had updates of Konami classics like *Contra* and *Castlevania*, MD owners were blessed with their own exclusive updates. They were no mere ports, but were designed from scratch, taking into account the hardware's limitations. And they were all the better because of this. There was no relying on vast colours or a custom Sony music chip; the gameplay had to be strong.

Importantly, it tapped in the mass market and appealed to families with low incomes. In impoverished areas in the USA it was popular among Black and Hispanic youths, who enjoyed the affordable easy-to-play arcade thrills provided. Children were also catered for, with both licensed and new IPs (*Quackshot* and *Toejam & Earl*). When the kids were tranquilised and asleep in bed, parents could indulge in a plethora of sports titles (*Madden* etc), violent brawlers (*Cyborg Justice*), or cerebral games like *Ecco*.

It was a system where much of the atmosphere and allure was born not only of the hardware and games, but the magazines, playground arguments, climate, and politics of the time. One of the most notable American magazines covering the system was GameFan, which, despite being multiformat, loved the Genesis. Its founder, Dave Halverson, understood, appreciated, and helped generate a lot buzz for Treasure too. GameFan praised their games, rightfully hyped up *Gunstar Heroes* to encourage sales, and were one of the very first English language magazines to conduct an interview with Treasure. Of course, not every multiformat magazine had quite the same views, which is why Edge infamously only gave *Gunstar Heroes* a half-page 6 out of 10 review. If you were an MD fan back in the early 1990s, Halverson's GameFan was the magazine you wanted to be reading!

We've not even yet mentioned subjects like the VR headset, Menacer Gun, Activator peripheral, *Virtua Racing*'s 3D graphics, pirate flash carts, Brazilian rock band Megadriver, Boris Vallejo, or the million-and-one related subjects. But it doesn't matter. Experiencing the system will tell you more than these words ever could.

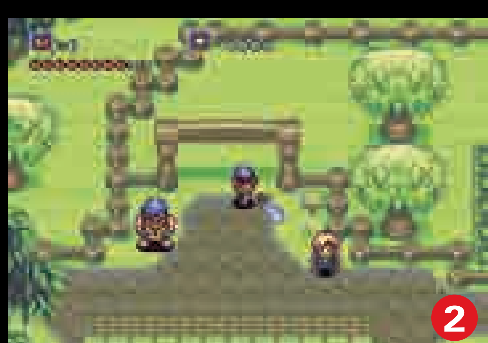


» Every kid wants to rip his best friend's spine out. The uncensored Sega version shifted the tides between MD and SNES popularity

SPECIAL THANKS TO

Many special thanks to www.sega-16.com, the best unofficial Mega Drive site online, for donating interview segments and images. Visit them for the full interviews! Thanks also to www.segagagadomain.com for images, Michael Katz for answering additional questions, and Sega's PR departments!







» There was certainly no shortage of exclusive, epic, and utterly essential action-RPGs: *Beyond Oasis* (1), *Soleil* (2), and *Landstalker* (3) are all must-haves!

MEGA DRIVE

PERFECT TEN GAMES

Sega's most successful console is home to dozens of great title, but here are ten of the very best. Obviously, you may disagree with some of the entries, or perhaps with some of the omissions, and if you do let us know at the usual address. Then we can politely explain to you why we're right and you're wrong. Enjoy.



01



02

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 2

» **RELEASED:** 1992
» **PUBLISHED BY:** SEGA
» **CREATED BY:** SONIC TEAM
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** SONIC THE HEDGEHOG

01 **After the success of the original *Sonic The Hedgehog*, it came as no surprise to see the lovable scamp returning a year later in a brand new adventure.** With a refined engine, the addition of Miles "Tails" Prowler, a greatly enhanced bonus stage and an excellent two-player mode, *Sonic The Hedgehog 2* is easily one of the hedgehog's most memorable 16-bit outings. While the core gameplay is little different to that seen in the original, Sonic Team threw in plenty of new touches to ensure that gamers wouldn't feel short-changed. The end result is not only one of the Mega Drive's greatest platformers, but quite possibly the hedgehog's finest hours on any system.

GUNSTAR HEROES

» **RELEASED:** 1993
» **PUBLISHED BY:** SEGA
» **CREATED BY:** TREASURE
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** DYNAMITE HEADDY

02 **Outrageously good platformer/shooter that features dazzling graphics, a crazy relentless pace and dozens of fantastic boss encounters.** Created by a bunch of ex Konami staffers (you should all know the story by now) *Gunstar Heroes* does tricks with the Mega Drive's hardware that many thought impossible, and even today it has a freshness that belies its 13-year-old roots. While special mention must obviously go to the game's astounding visuals, Treasure also ensured that the gameplay was just as special and injected all manner of interesting play mechanics to ensure that every level remains as fresh as a proverbial daisy. If you're after a frenetic blaster then look no further. This is run-'n-gun heaven.

DEVIL CRASH

» **RELEASED:** 1991
» **PUBLISHED BY:** TECHNO SOFT
» **CREATED BY:** IN-HOUSE
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** THUNDER FORCE III

03 **There's a few pinball games on Sega's Mega Drive but this superb 1991 offering from Techno Soft remains a firm favourite.** While it only features one main table, it's well designed and boasts all manner of different bonuses that lead you to several smaller, mini-tables. While Techno Soft's previous pinball title *Alien Crush* featured an alien theme, *Devil Crash* has chortling knights, chanting monks and dragons occupying its tables. Released in the UK as *Dragon's Fury*, *Devil Crash* is a superb pinball game that should last you forever. Oh, and it's got one of the most rocking soundtracks we've ever heard.

STREETS OF RAGE 2

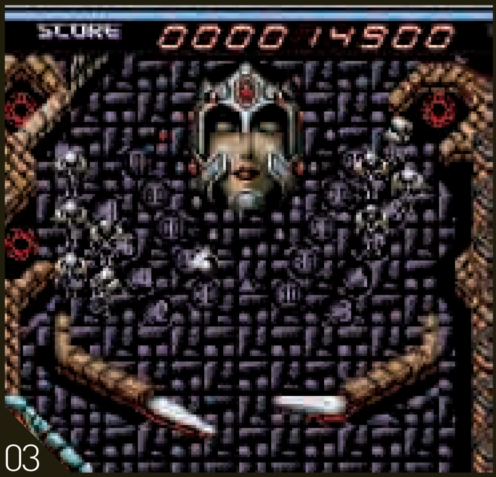
» **RELEASED:** 1993
» **PUBLISHED BY:** SEGA
» **CREATED BY:** IN-HOUSE
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** STREETS OF RAGE

04 **As with *Sonic The Hedgehog 2*, Sega took everything that made the original *Streets Of Rage* so fun to play and turned it up to 11.** The visuals have had an overhaul with all the heroes and enemies being beefed up and boasting greatly improved detail. Yuzo Koshiro is back with another thumping soundtrack and the game's many bosses are tougher than ever. Each character now has a selection of special moves and there are four different protagonists to choose from: Axel and Blaze from the original game and new boys Skate and Max. A magnificent scrolling fighter that's crying out for a next-gen remake.

STRIDER

» **RELEASED:** 1991
» **PUBLISHED BY:** SEGA
» **CREATED BY:** IN-HOUSE
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** AFTER BURNER

05 **Oh come on, did you really think we'd do a Mega Drive top ten and not feature *Strider*?** Despite Darran's obsessive love for Capcom's purple clad ninja (it's a long sad story) *Strider*'s addition is easily justified, as it's quite simply the strongest arcade port on Sega's 16-bit console. Not only does it capture all the character of the coin-op classic, it goes one step further and delivers a stunning soundtrack that actually manages to improve on the arcade original. Sure there's a fair amount of flickering here and there but as far as capturing the essence of the original game goes no other Mega Drive conversion comes close. Essential.



03



04



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DESERT STRIKE: RETURN TO THE GULF

- » **RELEASED:** 1992
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** ELECTRONIC ARTS
- » **CREATED BY:** IN-HOUSE
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** JUNGLE STRIKE

06 **Set a year after the events in the Gulf War, *Desert Strike* sees you climbing into an Apache and using it to stop a despot in the Middle East from starting World War III.** Utilising an isometric viewpoint, EA's blaster saw you storming into armed bases to rescue POWs, whilst using your firepower to take out anything that stood in your way. Despite the destruction you can cause, *Desert Strike* is quite a cerebral affair, with many of the later levels requiring a fair amount of strategy to complete. The thinking man's shoot-'em-up.

SHINOBI III: RETURN OF THE NINJA MASTER

- » **RELEASED:** 1993
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** SEGA
- » **CREATED BY:** IN-HOUSE
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** THE REVENGE OF SHINOBI

07 **Despite a lengthy development period, *Shinobi III*'s four-year wait was worth it.** Not only has the pace been increased, your ninja now knows a selection of new skills. Flying-kicks, a running dash and using your hands to swing across ceilings are just a few of the new abilities you can use and all have been perfectly integrated into the game. There are even sections where you can ride horses or surf along the crest of a wave, dispensing bad guys as you go. If only the later games showed a tenth of the imagination of *Shinobi III*…

ECCO THE DOLPHIN

- » **RELEASED:** 1993
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** SEGA
- » **CREATED BY:** NOVOTRADE INTERNATIONAL
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** JAWS UNLEASHED

08 **Delightful underwater adventure that sees you trying to rescue your dolphin friends when they all get sucked up by a mysterious hurricane.** With its focus on exploring the expansive stages and its many devious puzzles, *Ecco The Dolphin* was quite unlike any other game at the time and instantly caught the public's attention. The underwater environments are full of detail and bursting with all sorts of exotic undersea creatures. Our only real complaints with Ecco is that some of the sections can be difficult to negotiate, ruining the otherwise tranquil atmosphere.


09

THUNDER FORCE IV

- » **RELEASED:** 1993
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** SEGA
- » **CREATED BY:** TECHNO SOFT
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** ALIEN CRUSH

09 **While *Thunder Force III* was never released in the UK, Sega atoned by releasing its superb sequel in 1993.** Techno Soft's fourth *Thunder Force* title (and the third to appear on the Mega Drive) boasted amazing visuals, over-the-top weaponry and a stunning soundtrack that perfectly complemented the frenetic on-screen action. As with *Thunder Force III*, the first four levels could be approached in any order, but the stages themselves were far larger in scope and featured both vertical and horizontal sections. Throw in some insanely tough bosses, plenty of exotic locations and those stunning visuals and you have one of the Mega Drive's classiest shooters.

SHINING FORCE II

- » **RELEASED:** 1994
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** SEGA
- » **CREATED BY:** IN-HOUSE
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** SHINING FORCE

10 **While it essentially features the same combat system and gameplay mechanics as the original *Shining Force*, Sega's sequel is generally considered by many to be a far superior RPG.** Take the combat for example: it's a lot quicker now, making fights far less of a chore than before, and the new counter-attacks add a great degree of spice to the proceedings. The interaction of items is also better integrated with little touches like automatically passing a picked up item to another character when your main hero's pockets are full, and being able to view an item's stats before you buy them means that everything flows along rather nicely. A superb RPG that shouldn't be missed under any circumstances.


10

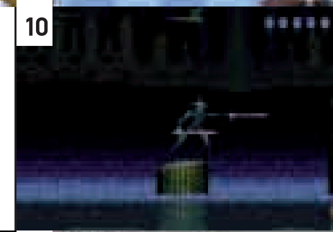




MEGA DRIVE

and the rest...

Sega's 16-bit Mega Drive is easily its greatest triumph and boasts a huge catalogue of fantastic games across a wide variety of genres.



01 MICHAEL JACKSON'S MOONWALKER
02 BUBSY THE BOBCAT
03 FANTASIA
04 SPACE HARRIER II
05 KLAX
06 ROAD RASH
07 AQUATIC GAMES
08 NSECTOR X
09 RAMBO III
10 CHAKAN THE FOREVER MAN
11 RISTAR
12 GHOSTBUSTERS
13 STRIDER
14 FLICKY
15 DJ BOY
16 VIRTUAL BART
17 ALTERED BEAST
18 GHOULS 'N GHOSTS
19 TETRIS
20 NHL HOCKEY 92
21 DARK CASTLE
22 PAC-MANIA
23 LETHAL ENFORCERS
24 SONIC THE HEDGEHOG
25 STEEL EMPIRE
26 LEMMINGS
27 WARDNER
28 KID CHAMELEON
29 MORTAL KOMBAT II
30 STREETS OF RAGE II
31 HELLFIRE
32 BATTLETOADS
33 FORGOTTEN WORLDS
34 SPLATTERHOUSE 3
35 MEGAMAN: THE WILEY WARS
36 EARNEST EVANS
37 SHADOW DANCER
38 FANTASTIC DIZZY
39 MERCS
40 THE TERMINATOR
41 PGA TOUR GOLF
42 AEROBLASTERS
43 ROCKET KNIGHT ADVENTURES
44 TOY STORY
45 THE GADGET TWINS
46 REVENGE OF SHINOBI
47 MICRO MACHINES 96
48 TOEJAM & EARL
49 JAMES POND
50 RAINBOW ISLANDS
51 AFTER BURNER
52 CASTLE OF ILLUSION
53 FIFA INTERNATIONAL SOCCER
54 STREETS OF RAGE
55 TURBO OUTRUN
56 GAIN GROUND
57 PHANTASY STAR IV
58 GOLDEN AXE
59 CANNON FODDER
60 ECCO THE DOLPHIN
61 FLASHBACK
62 ALADDIN
63 TRUXTON
64 COLUMNS
65 WORLD OF ILLUSION
66 SPEEDBALL 2
67 THE JUNGLE BOOK
68 WONDERBOY III
69 THUNDER FORCE III
70 AIR DIVER
71 ULTIMATE QIX
72 DEVIL CRASH
73 BATMAN
74 DECAP ATTACK
75 GYNOUG
76 URBAN STRIKE
77 OUTRUN
78 RED ZONE
79 ALIEN 3
80 GAUNTLET IV: THE FINAL ENCOUNTER
81 SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 2
82 THE IMMORTAL
83 NBA JAM
84 QUACKSHOT
85 GUNSTAR HEROES
86 CASTLEVANIA: THE NEXT GENERATION
87 THUNDER FORCE IV




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FIGHT !!
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This is your first job since
you joined the Hunters Guild.
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ZELDA: 'WAND OF GAMELON' & 'LINK: FACES OF EVIL'

The first two Nintendo licenced CDi Zelda and Link titles are excellent. This defies the world consensus on the matter, but John Szczepaniak is determined to end the fallacies and argue the case for these much-maligned titles.



Very few could afford a CDi at the time, and even less experienced the infamous Nintendo licences released on it. History says they came about because Nintendo couldn't make up its mind up about who to jump into bed with when developing CD hardware. Backing out of a deal with Sony (which led to the PlayStation), Nintendo tried to ally itself with Philips. This collapsed and somewhere along the line Philips gained the chance to create several games with Nintendo characters. They were in a club, which very few non-Japanese companies ever join. Such details are unimportant, and few played the games. But this didn't stop several magazines (which also never played them) from setting off hate campaigns, the flames of which were blindly carried by forums across the world. The criticisms though were never followed by any articulate descriptions; what did the games actually involve? Reading such venomous things should ignite one's curiosity to track down and play these licensed titles, then decide for themselves. You'd be surprised to discover some had genuine merit, and were in their own way quite good.

Researching *Zelda: Wand Of Gamelon* and *Link: Faces Of Evil* (hereafter collectively referred to as *ZL*) has been its own arduous and difficult adventure, taking over 12 months to complete. Acquiring the hardware costs a great deal, while making sure everything actually works can induce a sweat drenched



"IGOR WENT [TO RUSSIA], FOUND SIX PEOPLE, BROUGHT THEM OVER TO THE US, [THEN] PUT THEM UP IN AN APARTMENT" DALE DESHARONE

rage. With the internal, and totally irreplaceable save-data battery committing suicide before the quest began, Retro Gamer was reduced to completing *ZL* in single, straight, four-hour sessions. Twice. Further complicating matters, the gentleman behind the games, a Mr Dale DeSharone, changed his name during the early Nineties. This added an entirely new dimension to the investigation, and the fascinating history of Mr DeSharone will be documented in a future issue. But for now, let us follow the 40-minute interview where he candidly spoke about *ZL*.

The events that led to the creation of *ZL* were inconspicuous; by his own admission Mr DeSharone says he "just sort of fell into [games design] by accident" during his days as a primary school teacher, while his formation in 1991 of the team that would be tasked with development was also by chance. Despite this, DeSharone was actually one of the most suitable people for creating an adventure based on Nintendo characters. Not only had he made a program that allowed the creation of your own adventure titles in the early Eighties, but he was also the man responsible for the much-loved 1984 classic, *Below The Root* (see boxout: Roots Of Origin).

He explained the genesis. "In 1987 I moved to Boston to help build a team for Spinnaker Software, [which] had a deal with Philips to produce seven [CDi] launch titles. One year turned into four. After launch I left, starting a new development company, and was able to get funding from American Interactive Media (Philips' CDi software publishing arm). Most of the CDi team from Spinnaker left to join this new group. This is where the *Link* and *Zelda* story begins."

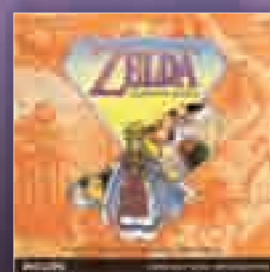
Next he answers, and in doing so also raises, several questions about the nature of the Philips agreement. "Somehow, Philips got a deal with Nintendo to license five characters. As I understood the arrangement it wasn't a licence of five games but five characters. A number of developers pitched ideas, AIM chose to go with the biggest names that Nintendo had at the time. [We were working closely with AIM, so] knew about the Nintendo possibilities. At that time they didn't exactly know which characters they wanted. Most of the people at AIM weren't 'game people'. We pitched ideas for a game starring Link and one with Zelda. The development budgets were not high, they were around $600,000." The minimal funding DeSharone received was in contrast to those developing educational titles like "*Treasures Of The Smithsonian*" on CDi, which had multi-million dollar budgets.

"We made a pitch that we could maximize the quality of the games by combining the funding to develop only one engine that would be used by both. This was in 1991-92 and even at this time a US technical employee cost about $100,000 per year to support (salary, taxes, office space, equipment, insurance, administration costs). This was also a time when a 1GB hard drive cost $3000. We had a team of three programmers, one audio engineer/composer, and four [in-game] artists. We had a single freelance writer [Jonathan Merritt] who wrote the scripts and helped design both games." With just over a million dollars to create both games, DeSharone's budget



» Inside what appears to be a Viking ship stranded atop a high mountain, you will find people to aid Link's quest

IN THE KNOW



» **PUBLISHER:** PHILIPS AMERICAN INTERACTIVE MEDIA

» **DEVELOPER:** ANIMATION MAGIC

» **RELEASED:** 1993

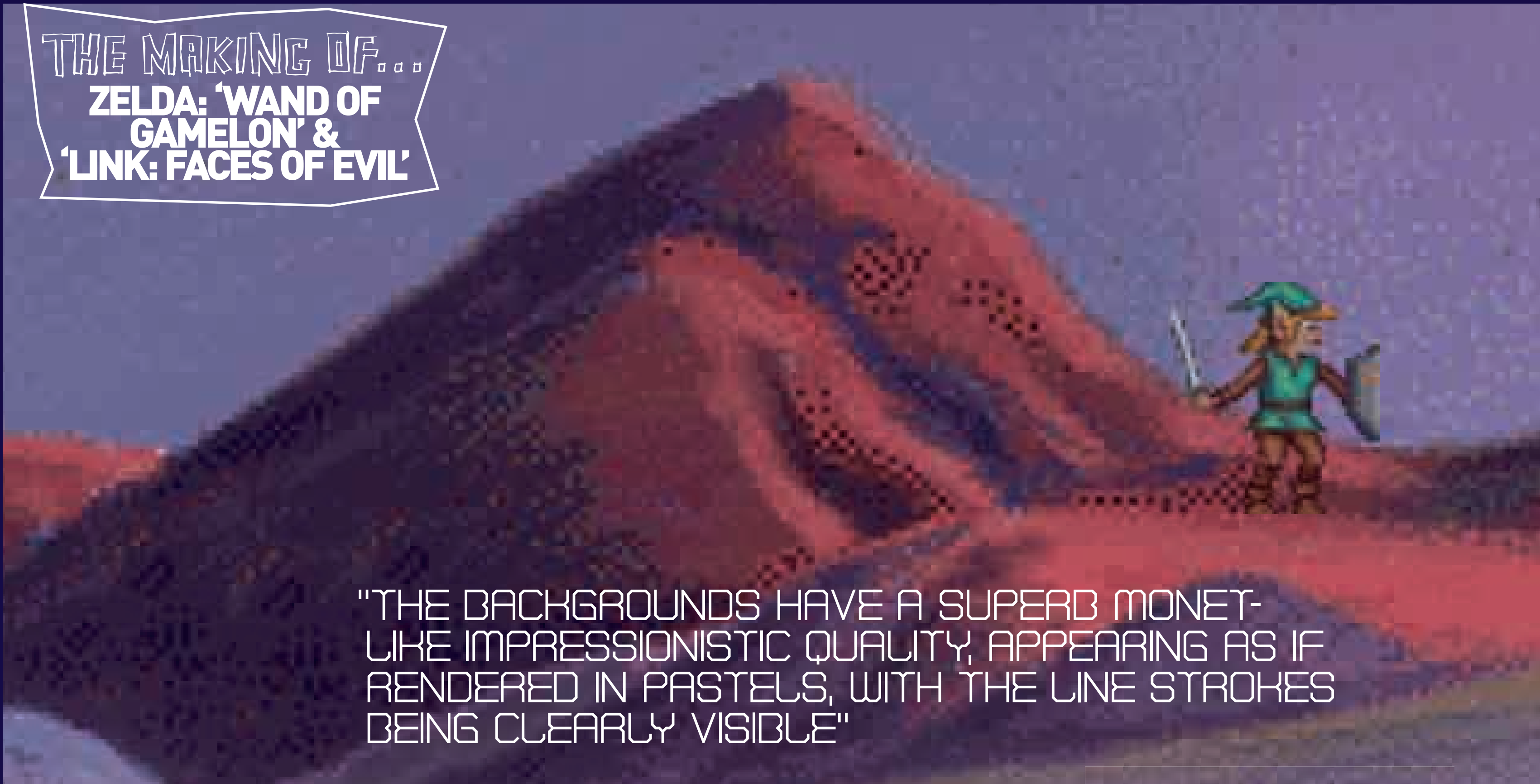
» **GENRE:** ADVENTURE

» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5-£10 EACH





» Zelda: Wand of Gamelon proved to be a much better game than many thought and is well worth tracking down



THE MAKING OF... ZELDA: 'WAND OF GAMELON' & 'LINK: FACES OF EVIL'

"THE BACKGROUNDS HAVE A SUPERB MONET-LIKE IMPRESSIONISTIC QUALITY, APPEARING AS IF RENDERED IN PASTELS, WITH THE LINE STROKES BEING CLEARLY VISIBLE"



» Before criticising the CDi titles, first finish *Zelda II* on the NES. The praise its gameplay receives is deeply puzzling!

OTHER GAMES IN THE SERIES:

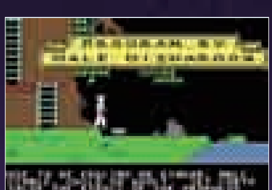
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA, ADVENTURES OF LINK, A LINK TO THE PAST, LINK'S AWAKENING, ZELDA'S ADVENTURE, OCARINA OF TIME, MAJORA'S MASK, THE WIND WAKER, THE MINISH CAP, TWILIGHT PRINCESS

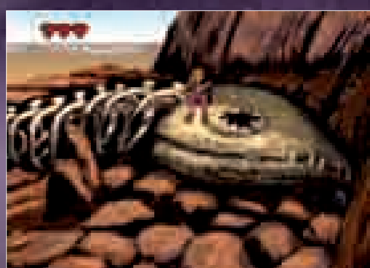
DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

BELOW THE ROOT
SYSTEMS: APPLE II, C64, DOS
YEAR: 1984

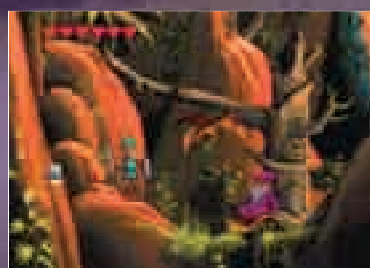
MUTANT RAMPAGE: BODYSLAM
SYSTEMS: CDi
YEAR: 1994

WARCRAFT ADVENTURES: LORD OF THE CLANS
SYSTEMS: PC, APPLE MAC
YEAR: CANCELLED 1998 (UNRELEASED)





» Bombs will break open the eye of this fossilized fish lying in the desert; the gentleman inside will help you



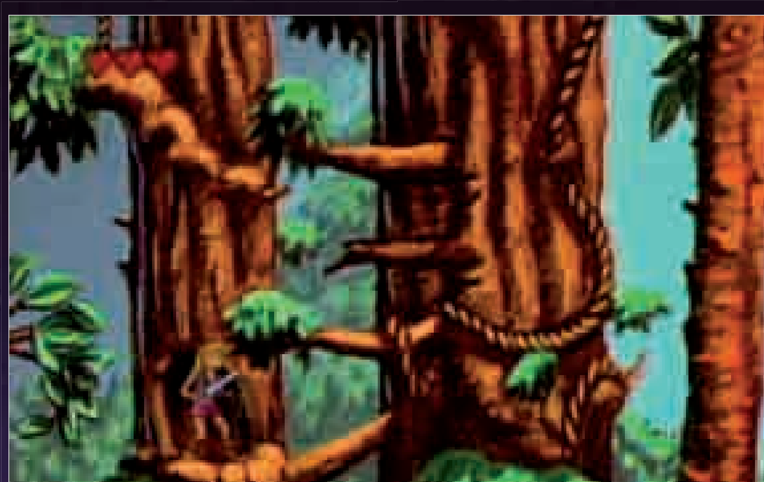
» This purple robed wizard acts as a guide to Link, throughout the *Faces Of Evil* game

was tight. They also hadn't yet made plans regarding any cinemas.

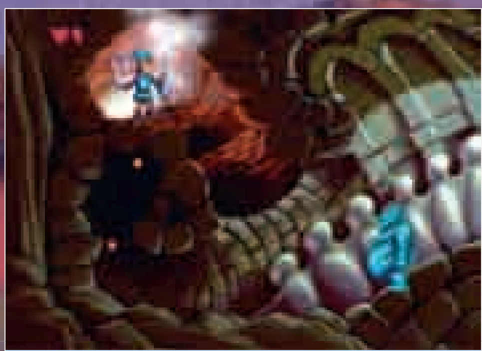
DeSharone describes how he found an answer in the form of Russian outsourcing – a first in the games industry! "AIM was expecting full-motion animation in the games, and I was trying to figure out how we were going to do that on the budgets. A mutual friend put me in touch with Igor Razboff. Perestroika was beginning and the Berlin Wall was coming down. Igor wanted to return to St. Petersburg and build a company that would provide a service to US companies. I had seen numerous animated films coming out of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. So I thought, 'well, we could probably do animation over there'. So [Igor] went over, found about six people who had some experience with 2D animation. The animators had varying levels of skill. Of course they didn't have the expertise US animators have, since US animators have been paid fair amounts of money, for decades, to learn animation. They're more scattered over there, in smaller studios. But we had about half a dozen people, and we brought them over to the US for six months, put them up in an apartment, and gave them computers and scanners. Most of them worked on animation paper, scanned it into the computer, and then cleaned up the lines and colour."

Regrettably this gamble didn't work. Most people have only seen the cinemas (thanks to the Internet), and they are the main source of derision for *ZL*. For anyone raised on a diet of games that contain Japanese anime cinemas (*Ninja Gaiden*, *Lunar*, etc.), *ZL*'s Russian equivalents, with an East-Bloc styling, prove very unpalatable. The one saving grace though, was the ingenious idea of overlaying NPC dialogue cinemas directly onto live gameplay. More engaging than a mere dialogue box but also less obtrusive than a full-blown cutscene. This technique has been underused through the years, with some exceptions like *Popful Mail* on the Turbo Duo. Even so, anyone who wishes to decide for themselves the quality of these titles is advised to skip all cinemas and focus only on the games within.

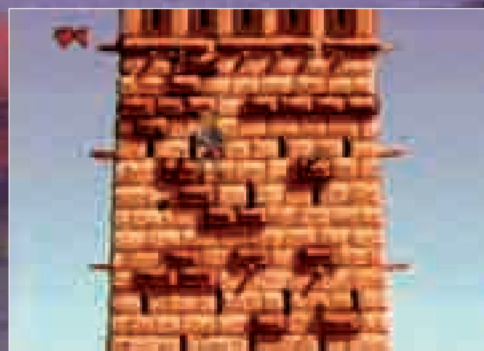
On the other hand, as DeSharone explains, "The backgrounds and all the real-time in-game character animation was done in the office in Cambridge." These backgrounds have an impressionistic quality, appearing as if rendered in pastels, with the line strokes being clearly visible. They're stunning, and really put the CD medium to good use by implementing high resolution scans of proper artwork. Even with increased storage sizes over the years, games either kept their original pixel art visuals, or instead used waxy CG (*Donkey Kong Country*), with only a scant few experimenting with things like claymation (*Skullmonkeys*) or graffiti (*Rakugaki Showtime*). So it's refreshing to see that *ZL*



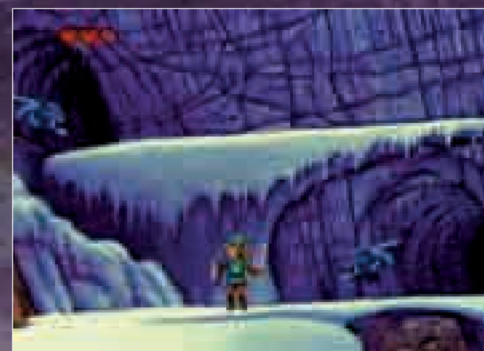
» Travel through the forests, high above the ground. Stores sell climbing ropes to make progress easier



» This gluttonous green boss, hiding in his Giger-esque lair, must be fed bombs to be slain



» Climbing the lighthouse can be tricky, so abandon the CDi's infrared controller at all costs! Get a hardwired one instead



» Firestones are essential for traversing these icy mountain wastes. Best stock up on them before heading out

displays such a distinct artistic visual style. Of course magazine screenshots can never convey what it's like seeing the games actually running, but look closely at those on these pages and you can almost visualise it.

For those who've only seen low-resolution videos, the one high-quality element that should be apparent is the diversity of the music. Due to hardware limitations it loops to the start when entering new areas, but wait around listening for a while and it proves better than most videogame compositions. With an adventurous upbeat tempo that encourages exploration, it blends electric guitar, panpipes, marimbas, and a wide variety of very unusual instruments. DeSharone reveals, "Our composer was Tony Trippi, who had worked with me at Spinnaker and then came on board, and worked with me at the new company. He created all the music for both games."

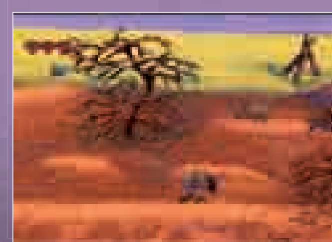
Unfortunately the high quality present in *ZL*'s music's was entirely absent from the voice acting. "We auditioned local [American Federation of Television and Radio Artists] union actors, and chose the voices for the game. There's about 10 minutes of animation in each game, so there was a fair amount of audio to edit." Apart from the lack of acting ability in those chosen, there is the added burden that accents do not match the cinemas, while the cinemas themselves don't always match in-game characters. One example being a very young blonde girl found inside a ship. The cinema portrays her as an obese older woman with red hair, while the actress puts on a cringe-worthy, heavy southern drawl. Even so, anyone playing the games should not allow these to drag down what is otherwise some excellent audio.

We then moved on to gameplay and the question everyone dwells on, did Philips or Nintendo have any influence over design? "No, we came up with the design for Philips. There was quite a bit of creative freedom, and Philips didn't have a lot of input. Nintendo's only input was we ran the design document and character sketches past them for approval. They were mostly interested in the look of the Link and Zelda characters. They were in somewhat of a formation stage back then, because the [in-game] characters didn't have the resolution we were going to be using." This information is important, showing quite clearly Nintendo was satisfied with things.

Playing with an open mind (remember, *ZL* came out in 1993), the games are fun. Some complain about high difficulty without taking the time to adapt. The difficulty shouldn't frustrate, since even after losing all your lives you continue from the map screen with all recently collected items. Flying enemies are a pain, but kill enough and they eventually stop. Alternatively use the bell/flute to freeze them, or bread to distract them. Enemy projectiles meanwhile can be deflected with the shield simply by standing motionless. Most animosity regarding gameplay is because of impatience, or wrongly comparing it to newer *Zelda* titles. *Zelda II* on the NES (*ZL*'s closest equivalent) bordered on impossible, yet was still praised.

ZL adopts an ingenious open-ended and non-linear design, with sections of the map able to be tackled in any order. Progress is derived from acquiring new items: Start by the bay and you're halted by fire lizards. Move to the icy mountains, while collecting snowballs, and soon you're stopped by ice monkeys. Going back, the fire lizards are dispatched with snowballs, which leads to a new area, while the fire stones they drop when slain can now defeat said monkeys, leading again to new areas. This staggered progress (much like *Zelda* or *Metroid* titles) works very well in practice. There's a strong sense of satisfaction from solving puzzles and acquiring new items, all of which have multiple uses. As such, *ZL* does precisely what other games in the series do.

The design and structure was impeccable, but let down by hardware limitations. "CDi was dreadfully slow and severely limited. If



» Boars are just one of the many enemies that Zelda must face if she wants to complete her quest

ROOTS OF ORIGIN

One of Dale DeSharone's earliest games (from 1984) was the much loved, tree-climbing flick-screen adventure *Below The Root*, based on the book by Zilpha Keatley Snyder and available for the Apple II, IBM PCs and Commodore 64. It was a huge adventure and required gliding through the forest trees, the usage of several items, befriending of animals, and speaking to NPCs, all in order to discover the truth behind a cataclysmic secret. Ambitious at the time, and even today still very enjoyable.

Some might even compare it to *ZL*, released over a decade later, saying the titles had some slight similarities. When mentioned though, DeSharone was rather surprised by such comparisons. "<short pause> Right… Yes… Interesting. Yeah, well, side-view-games are side-view-games. <laughs> Or they were at the time."

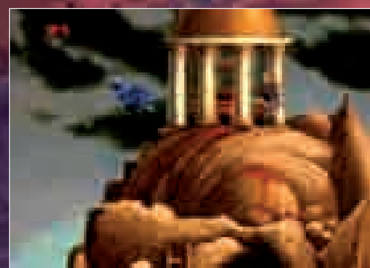
Even if *Below The Root* had no direct influence, the fact remains that DeSharone already had experience in making side-scrolling adventures when tasked with *ZL*.



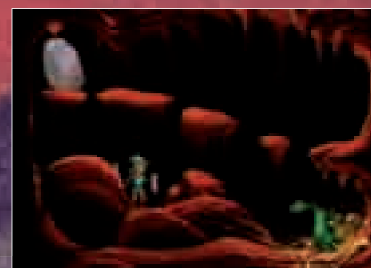
» It's not easy to see here, but this background looks lovely in motion. If only they had HD TV in 1993!

THE MAKING OF...

ZELDA: 'WAND OF GAMELON' & 'LINK: FACES OF EVIL'



» High atop another mountain Zelda will find this shrine, inside of which slumbers a fearsome boss



» Using a lantern inside this dark cave will reveal a dragon guarding an important quest item

you look at the scrolling you'll see [it] only scrolls about 2.5 screens horizontally. This was dictated by the video memory available. It was just obviously not a game system and Philips was actually very clear in telling us that they didn't believe the market for [CDi] was games." DeSharone went to great lengths elaborating: there were problems with streaming-audio, memory, disc access, graphics capabilities, not to mention a controller that suffered from severe lag and only two action buttons! It's a miracle things functioned as well as they did. The control problems particularly are likely to annoy, so it's essential to have a hardwired touchpad rather than a dreadful infrared one.

But what resources did Nintendo provide for development? "We only had the two Nintendo [*Zelda*] games that had come out previously, and then box art in terms of the design of the characters; box and booklet artwork. Otherwise there wasn't anything that came from Nintendo."

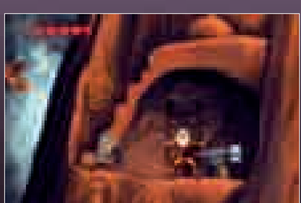
And why didn't they go with a top-down design, like the first NES game? "I think Philips would never have approved that, [believing it] looked old and wasn't making use of the CDi capabilities. They would have looked at it just visually as opposed to gameplay. That was what they were most concerned with. Does the CDi game look visually different from other [system's games], and are we making use of the graphics? The possibility that top-down might have been more fun wouldn't have affected them. So we pushed for the side view." It must be noted that several years later when CDi was dying, Philips allowed Viridis Corporation to create a top-down *Zelda* that turned out utterly dire (see boxout).

Of course DeSharone's team were huge fans of previous *Zelda* titles, though their aims were slightly different. "People really liked the games. But, I think we had more of a lyrical storytelling desire, or inclination. I think we were probably more focused on story, and that may have also had something to do with the CDi platform itself."

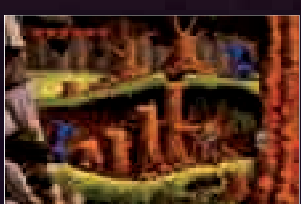
When questioned on the games' formulation and the atmosphere during development, he replied, "I worked with the writer on everything. It was a rough time. We'd just left Spinnaker, we had a new group of people, so we were creating an office in Cambridge. At the same time we had this group of animators [working] in a couple of apartments. I would be going back and forth, working with programmers, working to build the engine, back to the animators, going through the script and



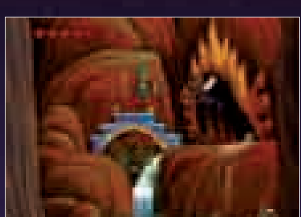
» Defeating these monkeys can prove a right pain for the young Link. Careful now…



» Free this blacksmith and Link will be rewarded with a sword that can shoot projectiles, just like other *Zelda* games!

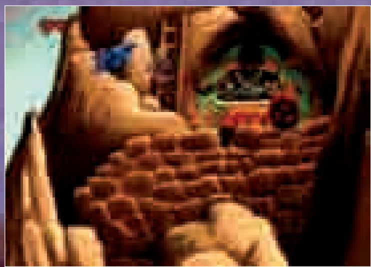


» There are many enemies hidden deep with the forests. Luckily they all drop precious Rupees when defeated!

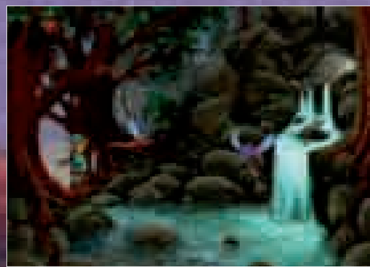


» With sword and shield in hand, Link prepares to enter a cave and slay the beasts within

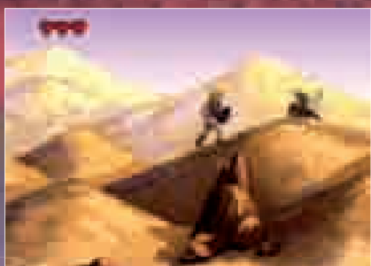
"IT MAY NOT HAVE BEEN BY NINTENDO, BUT LOOK PAST THE BURDENSOME NAME AND THERE ARE TWO WONDERFUL ADVENTURES TRYING TO BREAK OUT"



» There is a tremendous amount of visual diversity throughout both games, thanks to the increased storage size of CDs



» Link stumbles across a fairy grotto. Inside he can heal himself and fill empty bottles with the revitalising "water of life"

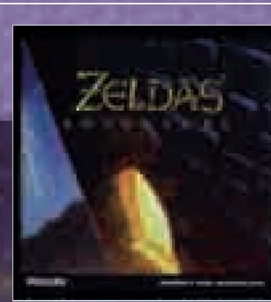


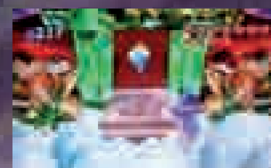
» The astounding music playing whilw you traverse the desert sands is one of the highlights in *The Wand Of Gamelon*



» Inside the Harlequin Bazaar, Link will stumble across many strange and even disturbing things. Bring plenty of bombs!

DESERVING DAMNATION





Zelda's Adventure was created by Viridis Corporation and released in 1995. Considering its resale price sometimes passes £100, and that due to its top-down perspective, misinformed forumites often describe it as being "the best of the Nintendo licenced bunch," one might think it was actually worth playing. This is wrong. Of all the Nintendo games on CDi (including unreleased ones), this above all deserves scorn!

It suffers from the most arbitrary and illogical designs ever seen in a videogame; one honestly wonders if it was rushed into stores having been half finished by a bunch of mutated, programming-savvy bovines. There are over 50 items to collect (most of which can be found in the first two hours), though less than a dozen are ever needed. Some enemies are impossible to defeat without certain items, clues are seldom given and it all degenerates into trial and error. This is compounded by a massive, non-linear map full of useless space. The visuals are sloppy, music almost non-existent, difficulty excruciatingly high, loading cumbersome, and controls fiddly.

We at Retro Gamer have played *Zelda's Adventure* to the end, in a single sitting lasting just under 12 hours; we have no intention of ever doing it again!

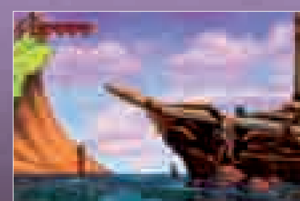
teaching them the process of how to get the animation done. Also, hiring the US based artists who were working on the game artwork itself. We were working on the games simultaneously, on the script, on the design and the artwork, and the animation of both at the same time. We had, maybe just a little over a year to produce them. So it was pretty tight." In the end the games were released simultaneously.

Wishing to hear some anecdotes, DeSharone was asked if he had anything else to share. Feeling satisfied, he simply said "no". The motivation for this feature was then explained, before a guilt-inducing question was asked; never let it be said that Retro Gamer doesn't push the boundaries by asking such difficult questions. DeSharone was challenged about criticisms raised against the creations, which he poured his heart into. Though taken aback, he remained ever courteous replying. "We had been aware of criticism following the release of the games. I can understand that people were disappointed. I guess they made comments about animation, but also gameplay and design. Given the time we had, and what we were creating at the time in terms of company infrastructure, I thought we did a good job. You know, we weren't Nintendo. And Nintendo makes fantastic games, which are well tuned in terms of gameplay, and they have amazing game designers. I would imagine that anything was going to fall short of that. At the same time Philips was expecting more production values in terms of music, visuals, animation. So there was a lot of push there. You put effort into that, and it doesn't go elsewhere. I felt that, given the circumstances, we did a good job. It could have been better, of course, it wasn't Nintendo."

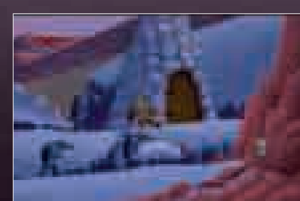
It may not have been by Nintendo, but if you look past the name, let go of all preconceptions, and learn to cope with the hardware and control setbacks, there are two wonderful adventures trying to break out! But they shouldn't be compared to or regarded as actual *Zelda* titles. Perhaps if they hadn't carried the name, and the expectations, *ZL* would have been regarded as two of the very best games on CDi. It's a sad fact that due to copyrights they can never be ported. It could be wagered that with improved controls and some decent anime cinemas, gamers would find them quite enjoyable. It's all about frame of mind. Hopefully this feature has gone some way to showing this.

SPECIAL THANKS

To Mr Dale DeSharone for answering countless questions. Thanks also to www.quebecgamers.com for kindly supplying images. Check out their site for some excellent gameplay videos!



» Use a raft to reach this shipwreck. Explore within, while fighting the ghosts of dead mariners for important items



» Link constantly finds himself in all sorts of danger. It's a good job he's rather handy with his sword and shield…



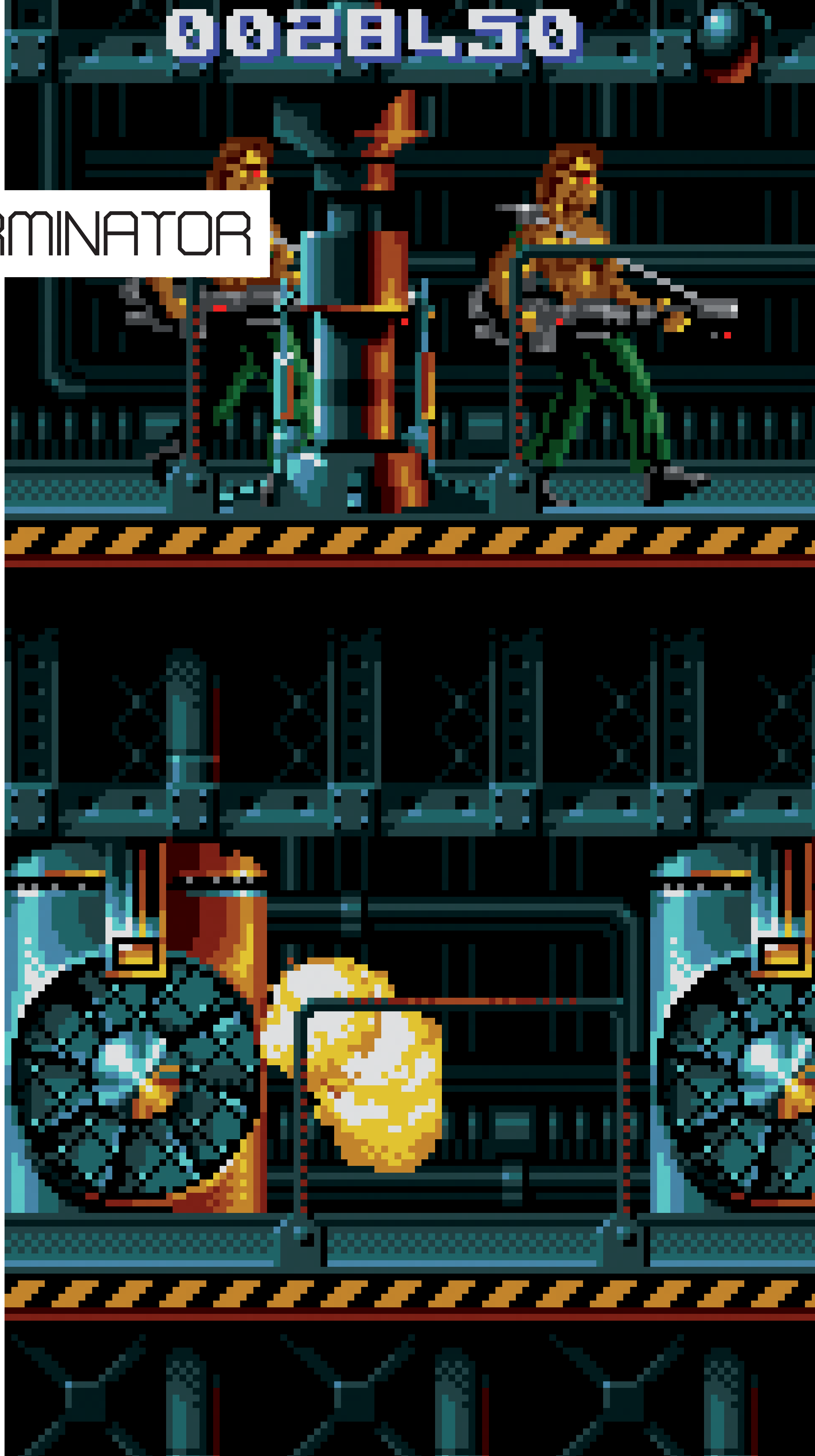
» Zelda will visit this seaside town quite often. It's great for buying supplies and there are many enemies to practice fighting



» Deep within the snowy mountains Link needs to find this Ice Queen, otherwise progress is impossible

THE TERMINATOR

"SARAH CONNOR?"





- » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- » **RELEASED:** 1992
- » **GENRE:** RUN-'N-GUN
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** SEGA MEGA DRIVE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5

HISTORY



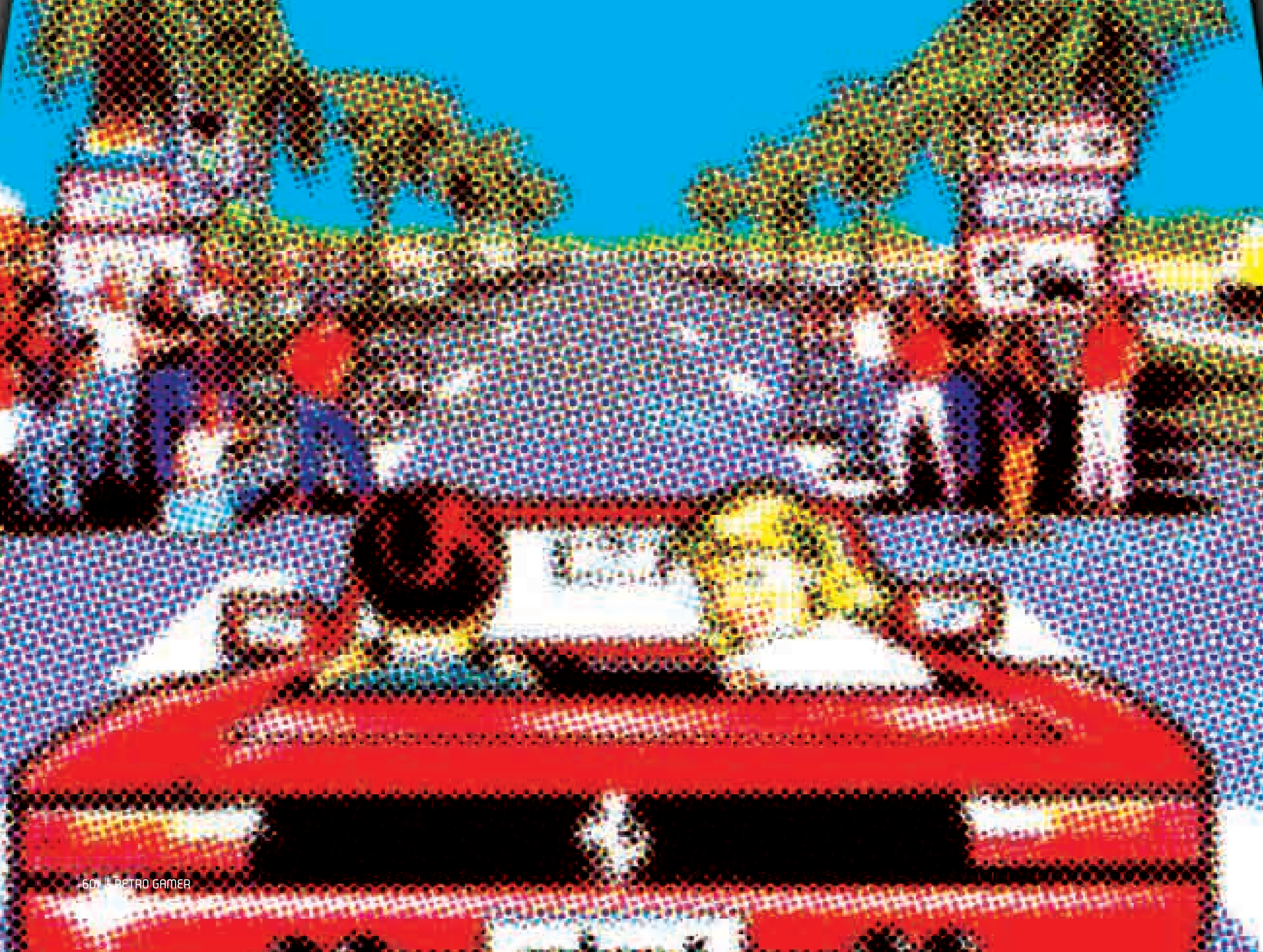
Released by Virgin Games in 1992, the Sega Mega Drive's interpretation of the tech-noir horror of *The Terminator* is a slick, action-packed journey. Taking on the role of future-war soldier Kyle Reese, players must fight their way through the cyborg-infested nuclear holocaust of 2029 to infiltrate Skynet and journey back in time to the perilous terrain of L.A 1984 in order to save Sarah Conner from the seemingly unstoppable T-800. Featuring labyrinthine stage designs, a thumping electronic soundtrack and gorgeous graphics that include motion-capture sprite animation and interweaving parallax scrolling, the game is a treat for all fans of the movie.

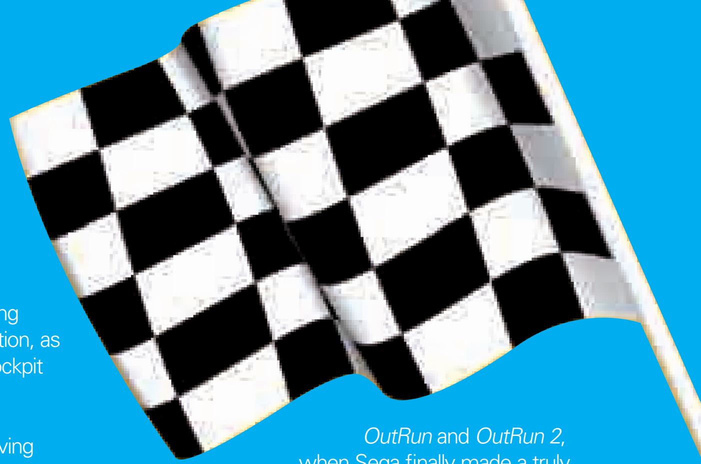
Indeed, about the only criticism that can be levelled at this commendable translation is that with only four levels and a redundant difficulty setting option, the game is far too easy for experienced players, resulting in an exhilarating but brief adventure. Thankfully, this oversight was put right in 1993 when Virgin took advantage of the 16-bit Sega's Mega CD add-on and released a truly stunning enhanced edition that ranks as one of the greatest platform run-'n-guns ever made. The producers of the title were eager to point out on the documentation that this was not simply a generic conversion of the Mega Drive release, but a completely revamped piece of software that harnessed the ability of the hardware to maximum effect. They were right to do so, as the game features full-motion video-captures taken from the motion picture, a cavalcade of digitised sound and graphics, an increased challenge thanks to a more robust difficulty setting and over double the number of levels found in the original. But the icing on the cake has to be the blistering CD-quality rock soundtrack courtesy of Tommy Tallarico that remains one of the most spine-tingling scores to ever accompany a videogame. Dark, foreboding excursions into a technological hell that expand upon the movie in great detail, both incarnations of this classic licence are cinematic in their execution and essential additions to any Sega owner's collection.


2

THE DEFINITIVE OutRun

STUART CAMPBELL GETS SUNBURNT EVERY TIME HE GOES OUT IN HIS REAL SPORTS CAR, SO HE WAS ONLY TOO HAPPY TO TAKE THE WHEEL AND CRUISE FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA THROUGH THE HISTORY OF ONE OF GAMING'S MOST ICONIC FRANCHISES WITHOUT HAVING TO PUT A HAT AND THREE GALLONS OF FACTOR 64 ON FIRST.





O*utRun* isn't actually a very good game. It can't be a coincidence that when gamers wax lyrical and nostalgic about it, it's most often the carefree melodies of "Magical Sound Shower", the nervous energy of "Splash Wave" or the hyperactive orchestral pile-up of "Passing Breeze" that they fondly recall, rather than the thrills of racing the narrow, pernickety Cloudy Mountain or the unforgivingly sudden cliff-lined twists of Devil's Canyon.

Or if not the music, then the graphics – the bright sunshine and windsurfers of Coconut Beach and Seaside Town were a revelation to gamers who'd previously had nothing much more to get excited about in racing games than a brief glimpse of a ferris wheel in *Pole Position 2*, and the giant banks of sprites rushing out of the screen certainly gave *OutRun* an air of big-time grandeur compared to its more modestly-scaled contemporaries. And finally, the branching routes and varied settings lent a feel of exploration, as if every time you sat in the game's hydraulic cockpit you were actually going somewhere, off on an adventure to a destination as yet undecided.

But the actual driving part is stiff and unforgiving and not much fun. Until *OutRun*, racing games had been about putting the pedal to the metal and dodging whatever appeared in your path in a white-knuckle twitch-fest. Now, just to stay on the road (never mind get past the rest of the traffic), you had to slow down, you had to brake – you had to change gears, for heaven's sake! – and all the boring stuff that you might as well get in a real car for. Going to the arcade was supposed to be about amusement, after all – it said so right over the door.

So despite its massive success, perhaps it's not all that surprising that 17 years passed between *OutRun* and *OutRun 2*, when Sega finally made a truly magnificent game that lived up to the atmosphere, and was even more fun to play than it was to watch someone else playing. They didn't just sit around waiting for inspiration and scratching their backsides in the intervening time, though – *OutRun* evolved into *OutRun 2* through a gruelling and error-strewn adolescence, so join us now on a different kind of beautiful journey, as we find out exactly how you get to there from here. (Although if we were you, we'd have left four hours earlier and started from somewhere else.)

1986
OUTRUN (ARCADE)

Surprisingly few people know that there were two distinct versions of arcade *OutRun* released. The Japanese and "Over Seas" versions have a different arrangement of courses, and some of the courses themselves are unique to their respective versions. For example, the famous Rock Tunnel stage (aka Gateway) is an entirely different course in the Over Seas version to the Japanese one, as well as appearing much sooner. (Presumably, Sega quickly realised it was one of the more impressive stages and wanted people to see it much earlier when the game was released in the West.) Of the countless home ports at the time, only the Mega Drive version included both options.

The home computer conversions, massively hyped by US Gold for the Christmas 1987 market, were legendarily terrible, though some of them (eg the Spectrum port) are quite playable now under emulation, with the speed doubled and the absence of the terrible multi-load. The C64 replaces "Passing Breeze" with a "Radio Off" option, which is endearingly rubbish. The Amiga one is pretty bad, but worth checking out for the splendidly over-the-top bombastic intro, and if you want to experience the ultimate horror track down the MSX version.

PLAY IT NOW ON: Arcade emulator MAME – the "outrun1" ROM set is the Japan version, and the "outrun2" set is Over Seas. The latter is also an unlockable in the Xbox port of *OutRun 2*.

1989
OUTRUN 3D (SEGA MASTER SYSTEM)

The Master System had already played host to a pretty dire *OutRun* port, but in 1989 Sega had another go. Designed for the gimmicky 3D-glasses peripheral but playable in normal-vision mode too, *OR3D* was slightly slower than the first SMS version, but had three difficulty settings, three extra new soundtracks ("Midnight Highway", "Color Ocean" and "Shining Wind"), and significantly better graphics – the beach was restored to the first stage, and the sluggish Rock Tunnel (whose graphics made crippling demands on all the home gaming platforms of the era) was cleverly replaced by a dark road tunnel instead.

PLAY IT NOW ON: The multi-platform emulator Meka, which can cope with the 3D output.



» As you can plainly see, this is the Over Seas version of the iconic Rock Tunnel

1989
BATTLE OUT RUN (SEGA MASTER SYSTEM)

It seemed a pity to rework a whole game engine just for *OR3D*, so the same year Sega also came up with *Battle OutRun*, a shameless rip-off of Taito's coin-op hit *Chase HQ*. Comprising a series of punishingly long and uneventful stages broken up only by the opportunity to buy some power-ups from a *Spy Hunter*-style equipment truck, then an annoyingly brief chance to ram the enemy car into submission,



» Low-powered CPU? Difficult graphics? If in doubt, black 'em out!

THE DEFINITIVE OutRun



» You wouldn't think that ramming a big jeep with a delicate Ferrari would be all that smart a tactic



» I would say you'd definitely overheated that turbo a smidgen



Battle OutRun was both boring and nothing really to do with *OutRun*.

PLAY IT NOW ON: Meka.

1989
TURBO OUTRUN (ARCADE)

The original *OutRun* was a coin-op smash hit, but after three years its popularity was on the wane. The solution was an "upgrade kit", easy for operators to slot into the existing cabinets, in the form of *Turbo OutRun*. Despite being chiefly an upgrade (dedicated *TO* cabs are rarer than bowler hats for wasps), *Turbo* is nevertheless a substantially changed sequel. Out go the distinctive branching routes, and in come a raft of new features: weather, night racing, obstacles on the track (including roadblocks, speed bumps, water and wrecked cars), upgrades for your car (three to choose from, one awarded after each set of four stages in the 16-stage trans-USA route), optional automatic gears, a rival who'll pinch your girlfriend if he beats you to the end of a section, annoying police cars, and of course the turbo boost that gives the game its name. While it's a great game, packed unrelentingly with high-speed action, *Turbo* never achieved anything like the popularity of its parent (perhaps partly because with several urban/darker locations it lacks the mellow, sunny-blue-sky ambience of the original), and nearly all the home ports were dreadful, particularly a barely-recognisable Mega Drive conversion. (The only half-decent attempt was the ugly but playable PC DOS one. The Commodore 64 version is usually well spoken-of, but goodness knows why.)

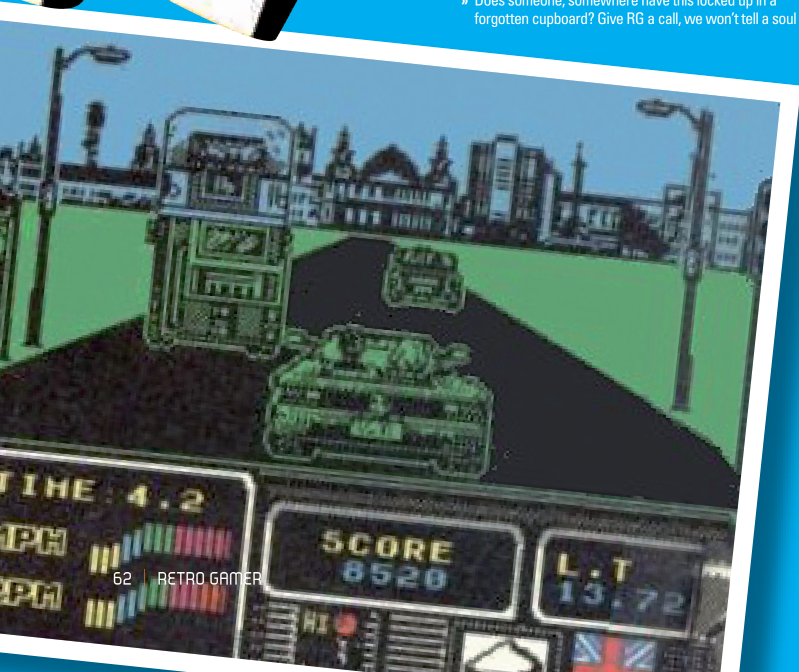
PLAY IT NOW ON: MAME.

1989
OUTRUN EUROPA (SPECTRUM)

Now, here's a little curio for you. In the May 1989 issue of Your Sinclair, the mag ran a two-page preview on a forthcoming third *OutRun* game for home-computer formats, and the first one not to be based on a coin-op. Promising 15 stages divided across five European countries, stacks of new features and almost three times the frame-rate of the original Speccy *OutRun* despite the impressively large graphics, the preview glows with praise and makes the game sound all but complete (though no actual release date is mentioned).

Allegedly, the game was shelved when publisher US Gold obtained the licence to convert *Turbo OutRun* instead, but it seems bizarre to completely bin such an apparently excellent game (rather than, say, hastily removing any references to *OutRun* and releasing it under a new title) purely in order to undertake another difficult conversion task. (There was also, incidentally, a different-looking C64 version around the same time, originally known as *OutRun Europe*, which looks set to see the light of day soon.) The Speccy version of *Turbo* suffered from most of the same flaws and sluggishness as its predecessor and was a sales flop. But what happened to all that speedy Europa code?

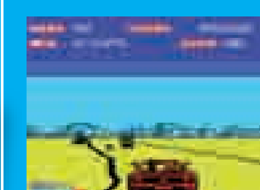
PLAY IT NOW ON: You can't.



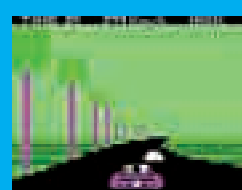
» Does someone, somewhere have this locked up in a forgotten cupboard? Give RG a call, we won't tell a soul

THE BEAUTIFUL JOURNEY

OutRun is, of course, famous for being one of the prettiest games of all time. But goodness me, what's this in the family closet?



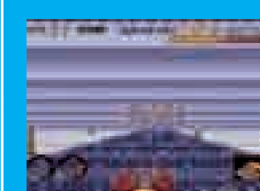
» MSX version: always put the roof up before getting the car resprayed



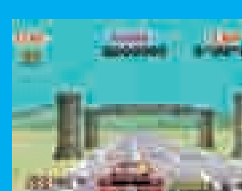
» Early Japanese computer the PC-6001. It's doing its best – bless it



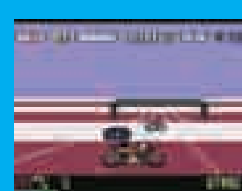
» The Spectrum version of *Out Run Europa* was slightly moodier



» "Mega Drive *Out Run* helpline? I seem to be getting a lot of interference"



» Rock Tunnel was somewhat neglected by the GBA National Heritage Trust



» Oh, come on, C64 owners – we've all driven down roads like this



» Just out of shot: the QE2, U-571, the royal yacht Britannia and the Titanic



1991
OUTRUN EUROPA (AMIGA/ST/MASTER SYSTEM/SPECTRUM/C64 ETC)

After the frenzy of activity in 1989, the next two years were a quiet time for *OutRun*, and it wasn't until the very end of 1991 that the next game in the series actually appeared

It was called *OutRun Europa*, but it bore no resemblance at all to the cancelled Spectrum game – or, for that matter, to any other *OutRun*. An all-original title created by UK developers Probe, *Europa* was a strange cross-continental spy chase, in which the player's traditional red Ferrari was replaced by a variety of vehicles including motorbikes, jetskis and a white Porsche. (The Ferraris, remarkably, weren't to reappear in an *OutRun* game for over a decade.)

The various formats' versions share a theme but are all essentially different games (for example, the Master System/Game Gear title uniquely features *Road Rash*-style punching when on your motorbike and rocket-firing when in your Porsche, and has a front end strongly resembling the C64's earlier, unreleased *OutRun Europa*). All, however, were burdened with an incomprehensible plot, poor visibility, skittish control and frustrating difficulty (especially the 16-bit jetski sections, which took place on the world's most crowded sea lanes), and *Europa* was about as successful as a launderette on a nudist beach.

PLAY IT NOW ON: The Amiga version is narrowly the least rubbish (followed by the Master System), so we'd advice use the excellent WinUAE emulator.

1992
OUTRUN 2019 (MEGA DRIVE)

The fourth and (thus far) final non-arcade-originated title in the *OutRun* lineage is a much-maligned game, and in your reporter's opinion rather unfairly so. It represents a welcome return to several core *OutRun* values, and is a fast, pure racer with lots to see. There are four different courses in the game, each with multiple stages (30 in total, making it twice the size of the original) spread across several branching routes, so it'll take you a fair amount of time just to drive each one. You'll also encounter lots of new features, like jumps, cross-country stretches, bridges, a superfast turbo that kicks in automatically when you reach a certain speed, and even alternative routes within individual stages, including sections where you can race along a raised section of track, landing safely on the lower section if you fall off.

The game suffers from a dark palette, and is a little easy on all but the top difficulty setting, but it's still one of the Mega Drive's top racers, and it can certainly hold its head high at gatherings of the *OutRun* family.

PLAY IT NOW ON: The superb Mega Drive emulator Fusion.

1992
OUTRUNNERS (ARCADE)

If you've ever wondered if there was a missing link between the radically different gameplay styles and handling models of the original *OutRun* and the recent sequels, then wonder no longer – for this was it. *OutRunners* was a twin-cabinet coin-op (you could play it single-player too, but every machine ever built was a two-seater and there was no actual standalone version) in which you can clearly see the roots of *OutRun 2* and *OutRun 2006*.

It's a light-hearted knockabout sort of game, with lots of humour (particularly in the end sequences and the wonderful 'Northern Europe' stage); much driftier cars (you can choose from eight different ones with slightly different characteristics, a first for an *OutRun* game) and the beginnings of *OR2*'s spectacular powerslides are in clear evidence. Several of the picturesque stages (of which there are nominally 30, but most are duplicated on both halves of the map in a different order) are also very reminiscent of ones found in the sequels (the bay bridge, waterfalls, Parisian streets, Mediterranean seaside towns, Easter Island heads and others).

The draw distances are impressive, and there are remixed versions of the classic *OutRun* soundtracks alongside the other tunes on your in-car radio, complete with DJ "Jake Elwood" (one for *Blues Brothers* fans, there). The cheesy Wurlitzer version of "Passing Breeze" is especially splendid, and suits the joyous, good-time feel of this grin-packed game perfectly.



» The soundtrack, incidentally, contains a tune called "Relight My Fire"

PLAY IT NOW ON: An old version of MAME (0.97 is recommended). More recent versions, in an example of the current MAME development team's obsession with accuracy over usability, will only play the game in twin-monitor mode, wasting more than half of the display area in order to accommodate a useless second screen. If you have plenty of cash and a big living room, you might also like to keep an eye out for the real thing - *OutRunners* was rather over-manufactured and under-sold, so you can easily pick up the arcade twin cabinet in good condition for less than £400.

1993
OUTRUNNERS (MEGA DRIVE)

This one's included as a separate game, because it shares more or less nothing with

» What's a racing game without a few elephants to dodge along the way?



THE DEFINITIVE OutRun



» You do get to choose from the same cars as in the arcade, though



» You can't tell, but we're listening to a remixed soundtrack as we speed through Cloudy Mountain here – honest

its coin-op counterpart except the name, and a restrictive two-player target market that means you get a horizontal split-screen even if you're playing in one-player mode. As well as the standard against-the-clock multiple-routes game, there's a baffling "Original" mode in which you race the CPU on single tracks with no branching. If you beat an opponent you win their car, if you lose you lose the car you were racing in, and you keep going until you've got no cars left to race with. The mode ends, seemingly arbitrarily, after six or seven levels even if you were winning, giving no kind of score or ranking. The MD game in general is extremely primitive both visually and playwise, with near-zero draw distance, terrible collision detection and tracks, which resemble the coin-op's in only a thematic sense.

PLAY IT NOW ON: Fusion.



1996
SEGA AGES OUTRUN (SATURN)

The first arcade-perfect home version of *OutRun*, released for the Japanese Saturn, is mainly notable for (as well as the inclusion of both the Japan and Over Seas modes) its "Arrange" soundtrack option, which along with the three classic *OutRun* tunes offers substantially-remixed new versions of each one, different to any before or since, making it essential for the hardcore *OutRun* completist (although, see Race Oddity). Beware, though, of buying the otherwise high-quality UK release, which bundled the game with two other equally excellent arcade ports (*Space Harrier* and *After Burner*) but hastily had to cut out the remixed tunes to make room on the disc. You can see just how hastily, too – the first time you boot the PAL version up and go to the Options screen, it's possible to select the Arrange version of Magical Sound Shower, but what it actually plays is "Maximum Power", the *After Burner* title-screen music. (If you select a different tune, the Arrange version disappears from the menu forever.)

PLAY IT NOW ON:
Your imported Japanese Saturn.

» "Are you sure there's nothing about this in the Highway Code?"





» Sega chose oddly grainy textures for the 3D remake of the original – compare this shot of Cloudy Mountain with the one from the Saturn game. Perhaps they didn't want it to steal *OutRun 2*'s "prettiness thunder"

2003
OUTRUN 2 (ARCADE)

Frankly, in this day and age it's amazing that a videogame publisher would let a brand as iconic and loved as *OutRun* lie dormant for a full decade, but evidently someone at Sega finally noticed and they decided to make up for the delay by really pulling out all the stops. *OutRun 2* took everything that was wonderful about the original – the settings, the graphics and the music – and threw away everything that wasn't (the rigid, uptight gameplay), to come up with perhaps the most joyful game ever to see the inside of an arcade.

The defining characteristic of the first *OutRun*'s gameplay was braking and slowing down in order to get round the road's more testing corners. In *OutRun 2*, the method was to go hell-for-leather all the way, and then throw your superpowered car (the Ferraris were back!) into a massive, spectacular, whooping-out-loud powerslide that gave you the ideal opportunity to admire the glorious scenery all the way down the game's incredible draw distances. The playful and inventive Heart Attack mode provided a whole new kind of challenge, the best soundtrack remixes yet were the icing on the cake, and every amusement arcade in the country that could scrape the money together bought one and operates it still.

PLAY IT NOW ON: Xbox. As you might know, the 2004 home conversion made *OutRun 2* even more fantastic, with heaps of new modes and unlockables.

2004
SEGA AGES 2500 VOL 13: OUTRUN (PS2)

If you want to get a handle on this alternative modern updating of *OutRun*, think of it as the game *OutRun* would have been if it had come out in the era of *Daytona USA* and *Sega Rally*.

Sega's "Ages 2500" remakes of its classic coin-op hits (now up to Volume 30 or thereabouts in Japan) have had very mixed receptions and the series is rather obscure as a result, but *OutRun* is one of its most successful releases.

As well as the original game (including both Japan and Over Seas courses) redone with fast, smooth true-3D graphics, you get a whole new *OutRun* in the form of "Arrange" mode, comprising 14 mostly-new stages through which you tussle with a bunch of rival racers, scoring a million bonus points for each one you beat to the final goal. There's also a Time Trial mode, and more new remixed versions of the classic three or tunes alongside the originals. It's a tad easy at Normal difficulty (and weirdly, the Ferraris have disappeared again), but this is a lovely *OutRun* that no fan should be without, especially at the knockdown price it sells for.

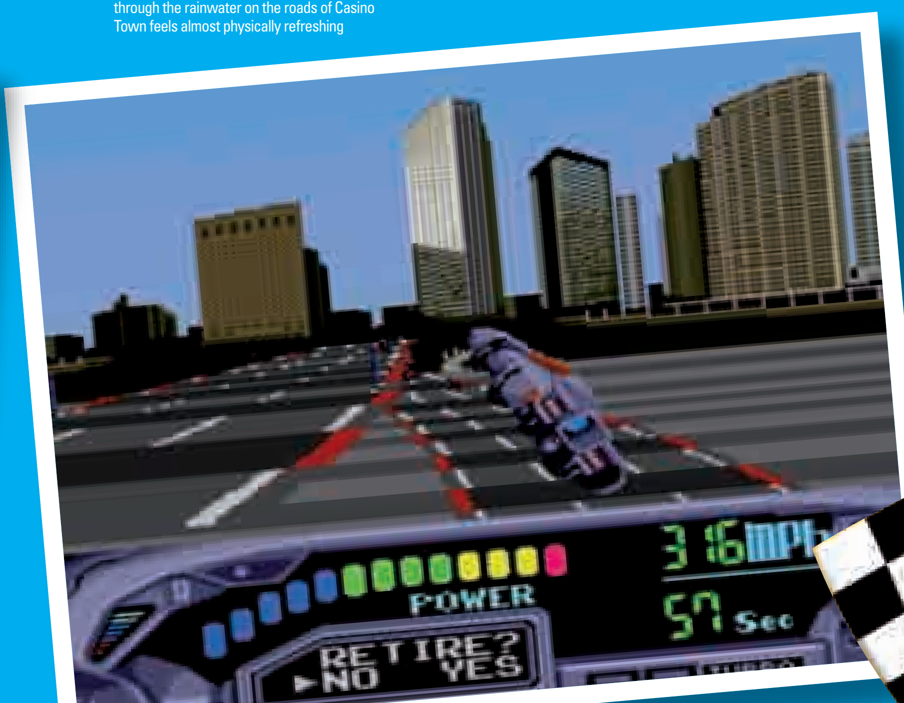
PLAY IT NOW ON: *Sega Classics Collection* for the PS2. Unlike most of the other nine ports on this 50Hz-butchered PAL compilation of Ages titles, *OutRun* gets out more or less intact, with only some small and unobtrusive side borders to put up with.

2006
OUTRUN 2006 COAST 2 COAST (XBOX/PS2/PC/PSP)

We're cheating a little with the chronology here, since frankly you should all be more than familiar with the home versions of *OR2* and *OR2006* without us having to explain them to you. The next game in the timeline was of course *OutRun 2 SP* (which stands, alphabet-defyingly, for *Special Tours*), which hit arcades in early 2005, but since that game's wholly contained within *Coast 2 Coast*, we'll cover it here instead. *OR2006: C2C* is packed with a simply ridiculous amount of *Out Run*.

You get the whole of arcade *OR2*, the whole of *Special Tours*, countless new modes including the opportunity to race all 15 stages of each version in a single continuous race, scores of all-new missions, and truckloads of stuff to unlock by earning "OutRun Miles". It's the greatest pure racing game money can buy on each of the four formats it's available on, and, to be honest, if you don't own it by this time tomorrow you need your face kicked off. Which isn't a very nice way to end the feature, so here's a thought about puppies: puppies are cute. See you next time, chums!

» After so many sun-baked courses, splashing through the rainwater on the roads of Casino Town feels almost physically refreshing



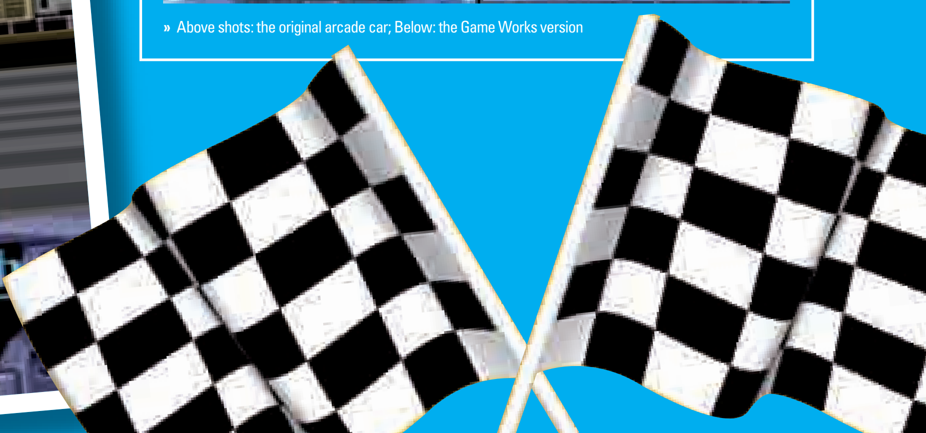
RACE ODDITY

If you're a really, really hardcore *OutRun* collector, you'll also want to own this. *Yu Suzuki Game Works Vol. 1* was a Japanese-only release for the Dreamcast, compiling the early coin-op history of the legendary designer. It featured arcade-perfect ports of *After Burner, Hang-On* (albeit one with *Shenmue* billboards sneaked in), *Power Drift* and *Space Harrier*, alongside a slightly arcade-imperfect version of *OutRun*. Due to some arcane licensing issues, your car isn't the classic *OutRun* Testarossa, but a different and generic-looking red sports car without the famous Ferrari prancing-horse logo on the back. Oddly for a game released exclusively in Japan, you get only the "Over Seas" model, and there are no new or remixed tunes either.

If you care enough to own this *OutRun* because it's got a slightly different car you probably have too much money, but if you at least want to pick it up cheaper than the very rare DC import, the Game Works version of *OutRun* is also the one which shows up in both the Dreamcast and Xbox versions of *Shenmue 2*. (Although slightly curiously, the Ferrari does return in the version of original *OutRun* that's unlockable in *OutRun 2* on the Xbox.) Seriously, though – get out more.



» Above shots: the original arcade car; Below: the Game Works version







why you must PLAY

ACTRAISER



» **PUBLISHER:** ENIX CORPORATION
» **DEVELOPER:** QUINTET
» **RELEASED:** 1993 (1990 JAPAN)
» **FEATURED FORMAT:** SNES
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £6+

WITH SO MANY GAMES AVAILABLE FOR EACH SYSTEM YOU'RE NEVER GOING TO BE ABLE TO PLAY THEM ALL. TO HELP REMEDY THIS SITUATION RETRO GAMER WILL BE CHAMPIONING A CLASSIC TITLE EACH MONTH, WHICH, WHILE EXTREMELY GOOD, NEVER GOT THE AUDIENCE IT TRULY DESERVED AND NEEDS TO BE PLAYED AT LEAST ONCE IN YOUR LIFETIME. THIS MONTH WE'RE LOOKING AT QUINTET'S ACTRAISER.

ONE SEQUEL TOO MANY

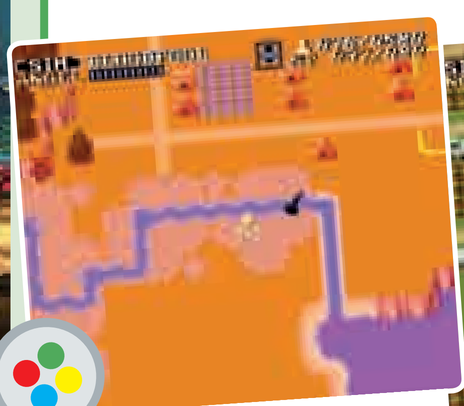
Considering how perfectly crafted the original game was you'd have expected a sequel to be even better. Sadly, *ActRaiser 2* was a huge fall from grace that wasn't a patch on its inspiration. Granted, Yuzo Koshiro's score was as good as ever and the graphics were to die for, but somewhere along the line Quintet had forgotten to include the all-important gameplay. Worst yet, the sim sections had been abandoned, meaning that *ActRaiser 2* was no different to many of the other scrolling fighters that were available. With its horrifically clunky controls, the insane difficulty and poor level design, *ActRaiser 2* is perfect proof that sometimes you can only bottle lightning once.



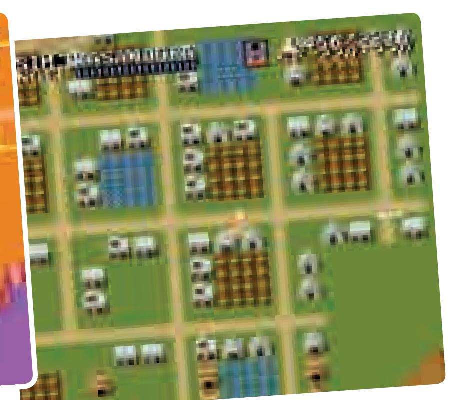
Games that straddle genres are always a difficult sell, so it comes as no surprise that Quintet's outrageously polished *ActRaiser* didn't find the fanbase it deserved when first released. Part scrolling slash-'em-up, part God sim, *ActRaiser* was like nothing else around upon its arrival in 1990, and three years later, when it appeared on UK shelves, it still managed to stand apart from virtually every other available SNES game.

Maybe it was the fact that it arrived three years too late, (although aesthetically it still stood head and shoulders over a great many other SNES offerings), or perhaps the mish-mash playing styles were too conflicting. Nevertheless, despite receiving praise in numerous magazines at the time, *ActRaiser* didn't exactly set the charts alight – a shame as it's a wonderfully unique experience that offers plenty of outstanding gaming moments for those willing to track it down.

It's never easy being a God and the being you control in *ActRaiser* is having a particularly hard time with his newfound divinity. The people of the world he oversees are crying out for spiritual guidance and need protecting from the many vicious monsters that your nemesis Tanzra has unleashed into the world. Only when all six realms have been secured will Tanzra's resting place finally be revealed and give you a chance of stopping your monstrous



» Use the power of sunshine to clear swamps and make them habitable for your followers



» Keep building up your lands and you'll soon be able to grow a selection of different crops. Alright… just two



» The Sky Palace is the home of your god and allows you to travel across the Mode 7 world

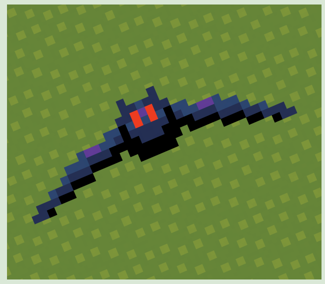
foe once and for all, but before that happens, you've got plenty of work to occupy your divine hands.

Fortunately, you're aided throughout your adventure by an affable angel, who not only fills in the role as personal advisor, but also acts as a controllable avatar for when you're let loose in *ActRaiser*'s sim sections. Full of useful information, he'll constantly give you subtle hints to ease your progress through the game and acts as a go-between for you and your followers. He's a charming creation and by the end of the game you'll have built up quite a rapport with the little fella. It's this interaction between yourself and the game that proves to be one of *ActRaiser*'s in strengths. One section sees you rescuing a young boy called Teddy, only to be told by your angel companion at *ActRaiser*'s poignant finale that the young lad had died earlier, but you weren't told for fear of getting upset. Quintet's opus sucks you in, and despite not having a single cutscene *ActRaiser* boasts a cinematic quality that few other 16-bit titles can muster. Indeed, everything about Quintet's game is on an impressively grand scale, and as it deftly switches between genres, like a great rollercoaster, you can't help but be taken along for the ride. Well we say rollercoaster, but *ActRaiser* is more akin to a log-flume. The sim sections are equivalent to the slow steady climb to the ride's zenith while *ActRaiser*'s outrageously good battles are comparable to the flume's final dizzying drop. And like all good rides, as soon as you've finished it, you'll be instantly returning for another go.

Ah yes, the action sections. Granted, the animation might not impress like it once did, and practically every boss you face is deceptively easy to defeat, but goddamn, they're still enjoyable to play through. Crammed with amazing attention to detail, the countryside you hack and slash your way through would be the perfect place to stop for a picnic if it wasn't for the many monsters you continually face. From the lush verdant forests of Fillmore, to the icy wastes of Northwall, *ActRaiser*'s environments are breathtaking in scope and many of them (Aitos and Northwall in particular) can still draw the odd gasp of wonderment. It wasn't just the locations that had been given plenty of care and attention, as the many opponents you face off against (particularly some of the huge bosses) add to *ActRaiser*'s graphical grandeur. Animation may look rather basic

KNOW YOUR FOE

Just a few of the enemies you should look out for



BAT
Carries off followers whenever it gets the chance. Can be killed with a single shot from your angel's bow.



DRAGON
Uses lightning to destroy houses. Can be killed with two hits from your angel's bow.



IMP
Destroys crops. Can be killed with three hits from your angel's bow.



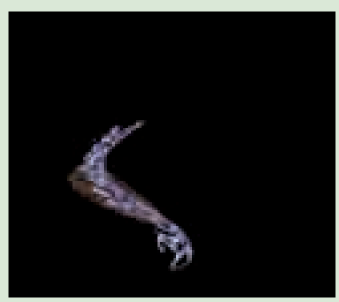
SKULLS
Creates devastating earthquakes that cripple villages. Can be killed with seven shots from your angel's bow.

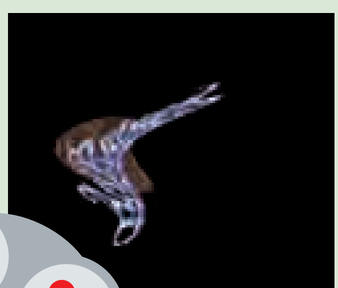
"EVERYTHING ABOUT QUINTET'S GAME IS ON AN IMPRESSIVELY GRAND SCALE"

MAGICAL MOMENT

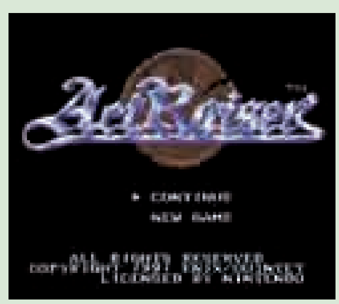
The game's not even started yet, but look how amazing the title screen is. Using the SNES's nifty Mode 7 the *ActRaiser* logo swirls around the screen to some truly excellent music. This is the stuff dreams are made of. Look at it swirling around, wooo, it's actually quite hypnotic. We could sit and watch this for hours, just losing ourselves in its silvery world.

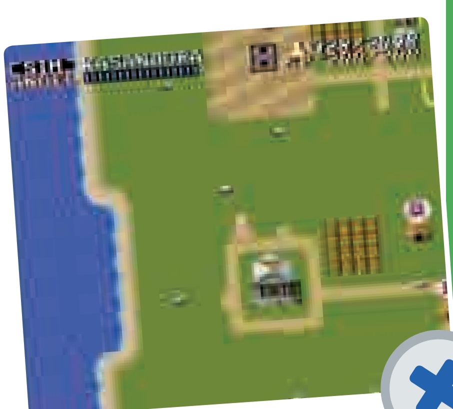






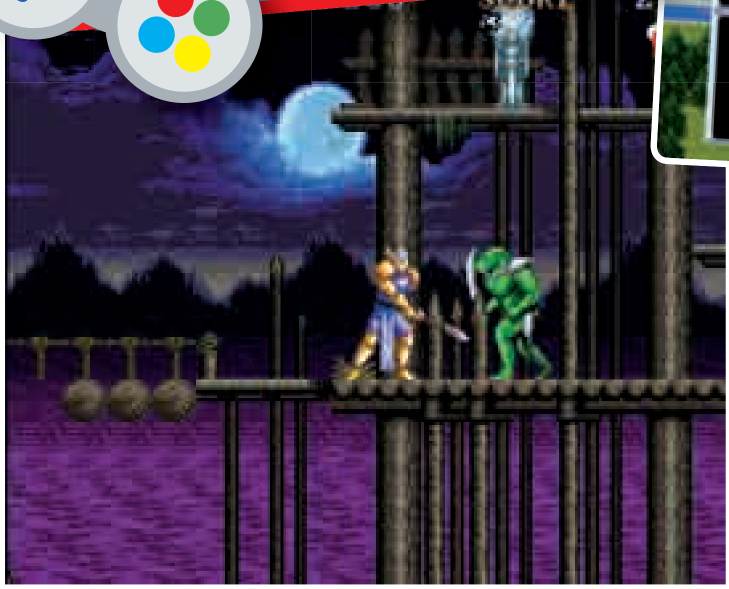




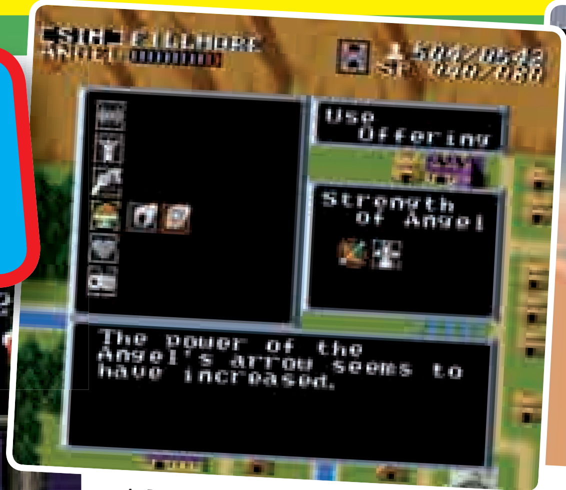


» Your poor followers are suffering from the plague. Surely one of the neighbouring countries has a cure?

why you must PLAY



» The landscape may look gorgeous but it's filled with all sorts of dangers



» *ActRaiser's* menu is simple in looks but wonderfully intuitive to operate



» *ActRaiser's* many scrolling levels still stand up today and look absolutely beautiful

"ACTRAISER STILL RETAINS A REFRESHING UNIQUENESS THAT ENABLES IT TO STAND PROUD AGAINST MANY OF THE SNES'S BETTER-KNOWN TITLES"

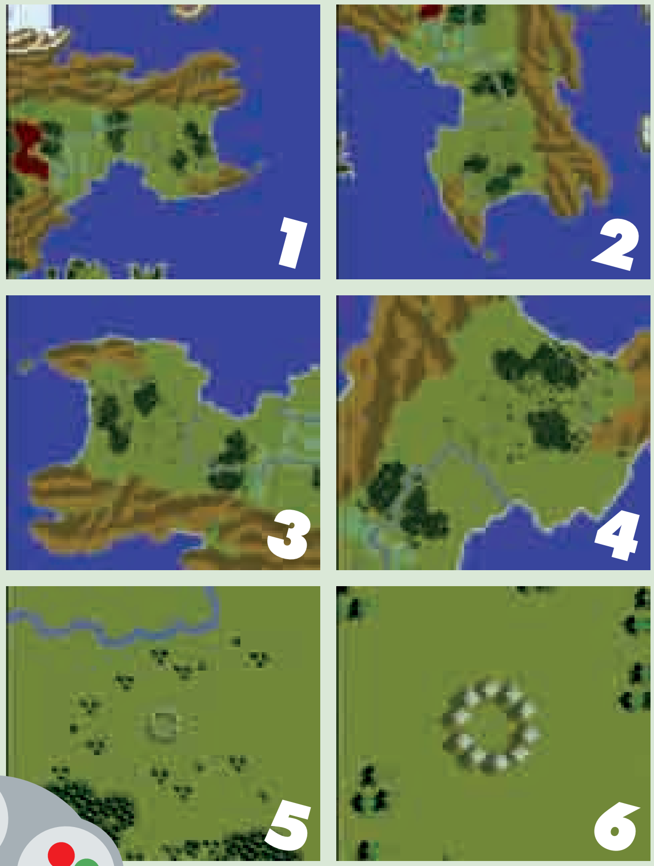
nowadays, but the sprite design featured throughout remains as strong as ever. Cute shambling apes, giant Ent-styled trees, mischievous looking gnomes and vicious lizard men may be little more than cannon-fodder for the impressively armoured knight you control, but that didn't mean that Quintet hadn't showed them any less attention than *ActRaiser's* mayors. Axe-throwing minotaurs, flame-spewing manticores, viciously fast water dragons, heavily-armoured centaurs, *ActRaiser's* bosses were very impressive and few will forget the last stage that sees you fighting several of them in quick succession before finally facing Tanra himself.

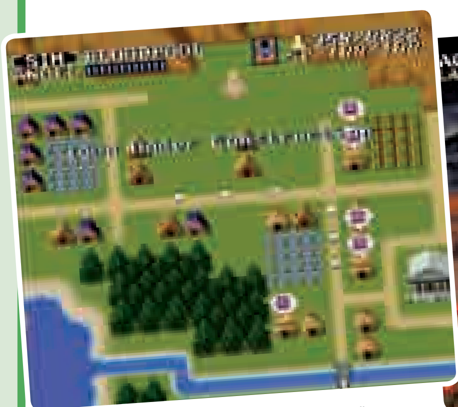
In truth though, *ActRaiser's* visuals tell only half the story, as it was its stunning soundtrack that truly drove home the game's cinematic qualities. Wonderfully bombastic in its scale and featuring a stunning range of orchestral tunes, *ActRaiser* is an aural delight and its selection of beautifully varied tunes never fails to impress. From the 20th Century Fox-styled opening that accompanies the swirling title screen, to the heartrending ending (all flutes and pipes), *ActRaiser's* music is as integral to the game as its actual gameplay and it's impossible to think of having one without the other. Of course, when you discover that *ActRaiser's* rousing score is by Yuzo Koshiro, the legendary musician behind the likes of *Shenmue*, *Revenge Of Shinobi* and the excellent *Streets Of Rage* trilogy, everything begins to make perfect sense.

So with its stirring music, beautiful visuals and cleverly juxtaposed genres *ActRaiser* sounds very nearly perfect, and it very nearly is. The only small downside to this beautifully crafted creation is that it's a little too easy, although in another way that can actually be seen as a bonus, as it will enable you to uncover *ActRaiser's* secrets over one long weekend. With today's RPGs being bogged down with lengthy cutscenes and monotonous levelling up, finding a game like *ActRaiser* that can be completed so quickly is truly refreshing. The relative speed with which you can play through *ActRaiser* must be levelled at its six sim sections, as they are extremely simplistic in their execution and require you to do little more than level the surrounding countryside with a selection of different powers (lightning, rain, or later earthquakes) while laying the ground work for your followers to build on and shoot any nearby monsters. While your subjects continually pester you with requests, most

REMEMBER WHEN?

Some of the most jaw-dropping moments in *ActRaiser* occur when you're about to enter a new battle. Beginning high above the Mode 7 landscape you zoom towards the ground, which continually rotates on your approach. As your descent continues, a slowly building orchestra sounds off in the background. It's a breathtaking scene that still impresses today.





» When things aren't going well your followers will soon give you a sign



» Now this is tricky. The screen continually scrolls forward, so you really need to be on your guard



LOCATION, LOCATION

ActRaiser's environments are many and varied…

FILLMORE

Your quest begins in the delightful land of Fillmore. While most of its countryside consists of rolling pastures there are a fair few trees that make building roads difficult. A quick blast of lightning soon solves this particular problem though.



BLOODPOOL

The swamp infested Bloodpool gets its name from the deep red of its largest lake. You discover that the large expanse of water is being poisoned by monsters, but how are you going to stop them and restore the lake to its former glory?



KASANDORA

Living in Kasandora appears impossible as it's filled with a huge expanse of inhospitable desert. Fortunately, you can summon up large quantities of rain to flush most of it away, meaning that your followers can soon rebuild new homes.



AITOS

The region of Aitos is similar to Kasandora in that it requires a lot of effort to enable your followers to live there. Use gusts of wind to keep their windmills turning and they will reward you with the wool they gather from the region's sheep.



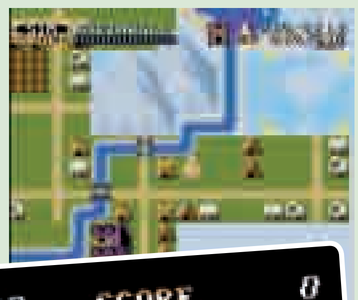
MARAHNA

A humid jungle that requires plenty of lightning blasts to destroy the island's many trees. You'll also be required to create an earthquake later in the game, so make sure you don't build too many homes near the targeted area…



NORTHWALL

The biggest problem you'll have at Northwall is that it's too cold for many of your villagers to work in. Surely one of your other countries has a way of keeping them warm… It also features one of the hardest stages in the game.



tasks require you to do little more than travel to an adjacent town and pick up an item that your current villagers are unable to create. Of course, with *ActRaiser* straddling two vastly different genres, neither of them were going to be as complex as a game that focused on a single playing style, so Quintet's linear approach can be somewhat justified. It also means that you can quickly race through the town building sections and return to the side-scrolling hack-fests – it should come as no surprise to learn that Quintet includes a "Professional Mode" that cuts out the sim building entirely and simply allows you to play all 12 of *ActRaiser*'s glorious levels.

Even after 16 years *ActRaiser* retains a refreshing uniqueness that enables it to stand proud against many of the SNES's better-known titles. The fact that many of you are unlikely to have played it the first time around should help make its discovery all the sweeter.



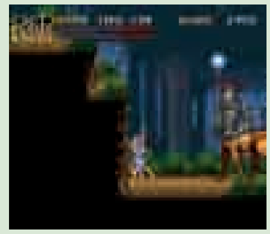
» The final showdown, but are you up for the task ahead?

BEASTLY BOSSES

Just a few of *ActRaiser*'s bosses and how to defeat them

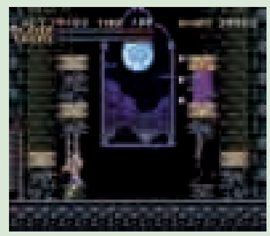
CENTAUR KNIGHT

The first boss may be huge but he's easy to kill. Duck under his attack and then get in a quick counter hit. When he fires his lightning attack, run to the far right of the screen.



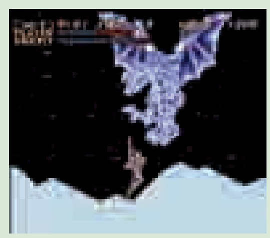
WIZARD

Stay at a distance to avoid his fire. When he lands on the bottom right, run over to score four hits on him. He'll turn into a werewolf, but just constantly hit him and he'll keel over.



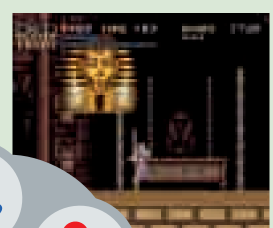
ICE WYVERN

Wait for him to fire ice at you then run away from him. Eventually he'll come to a stop, so manoeuvre behind him to get in a few solid strikes. Rinse, lather, and repeat…



GOLDEN PHARAOH

His eyes will indicate when he drops down, so stay out of his way. Once he's landed you can hit him and all you have to do is jump over the laser he fires and repeat the process.



遠くの稀で、エキゾチックなゲームを愛する人々のため

FULL OF EASTERN

YET ANOTHER A-MAZE-ING PC ENGINE GAME

GOMOLA SPEED

While it was possible to buy 8-bit consoles such as the PC Engine and Famicom (providing you knew where to look) it wasn't until the introduction of the 16-bit machines that import gaming truly took off in the UK. Each month, Retro Gamer will take a look at classic Japanese games that criminally never made it to UK shores. This month it's the bizarre PC Engine title *Gomola Speed*

IN THE KNOW



- **PUBLISHER:** UPL
- **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** PC ENGINE
- **ALSO AVAILABLE FOR:** N/A
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £20 +
- **CAN'T IMPORT? THEN WHY NOT TRY:** NIGHTS INTO DREAMS

Although *Gomala Speed* probably has closer relatives in terms of the way it plays, we feel that its spiritual descendant is Sonic Team's unique and often misunderstood *NiGHTS Into Dreams*. Both games involve taking out enemies by circling the main character around them, award multiple points for comboing actions together and require fluid movements that can be quite painful on a traditional D-pad. More importantly, like *Gomola Speed*, *NiGHTS* can be played without harming a single creature, except the bosses of course.



Interesting fact
UPL vanished from the gaming map in 1995, after the release of Neo Geo CD game *3 Count Bout*, and few now know where they went. Legend has it that the entire team was headhunted and recruited by Nintendo. Is Miyamoto a fan of *Gomola Speed?*



» Points can be combo'd by capturing multiple enemies with as short a body as possible

メガ駆動機構 **The PC Engine is probably the biggest crime ever committed against British gamers.** The most powerful of all the 8-bit consoles was never released on these shores and hundreds of outstanding videogames consequently never got onto our screens. While NEC's little white box is best known for the plethora of terrific shoot-'em-ups and platform games that appeared on the system, those importers who dug a little deeper into the Engine's catalogue of software found that it was also host to many unique titles that were unavailable on other platforms.

One such little-known gem is *Gomola Speed*: a game we affectionately refer to as the Millennium Falcon of PC Engine games because "it's not much to look at but has got it where it counts". Hailing from small developer UPL Company, *Gomola Speed* has a simple look that masks what is actually a complex, involving and highly challenging action game. It's difficult to pin down into one particular genre but if we were forced to file it away in our imaginary videogame library we'd probably have to classify it as a "Snake Action Maze Battle Collect-'em-up", such is the melting pot of gameplay styles that it consists of.

Whilst elements of *Gomola Speed* appear similar to other games – the level design recalls *Gauntlet*, the objectives hark back to Snake and the attacks resemble *NiGHTS* – as a whole it is a unique experience. Starting the game as the head of a mono-eyed worm/snake/thing you must crawl around the arena, collecting your body parts and eating all the food in order to open the exit. Body parts, which increase the length of the snake, can be collected by crawling into them but the food can only be eaten by actually

GAMES FROM THE EAST WHICH NEVER MADE IT TO UK SOIL

N PROMISE



» Level design becomes much more sophisticated as the game progresses



» *Gomola's* bosses inject a rare splash of colour into the game and add variety to the gameplay

encircling it. As well as collecting food you must also avoid the many enemies that populate the levels. Collide with one of these nasties and they will remove any of the body parts that they touch, leaving you with the task of collecting them back again. A collision with the head will cause instant death. These bothersome beasts can be defeated however. They must first be stunned with a bomb which you can lay near them and which they will then mistake for food and move in for a nibble before it explodes in their mouths. Once stunned they can be encircled in the same way as the food and banished to sprite heaven. Failing that, if you're some kind of digital pacifist, your snake creature can contract its body so when motionless it takes up only one tile thereby protecting its vulnerable body from attack.

When circling enemies the game's combo system becomes apparent. Scores are multiplied for capturing two or more enemies at once and can also be increased depending on how long the snake's body is. Trap an enemy with the maximum body length and the score will be quite low but encircle it with the lowest possible number of body parts attached and the score will be greatly multiplied. So playing with a smaller body may be much more difficult but the rewards are far greater; just remember that the snake's body must be at full length before it can pass through an exit and onto the next stage.

As the game progresses from start to finish the level design becomes increasingly complex and often fiendishly clever. Initial levels merely take the form of open arenas in which collecting all the food and body



» Divide and conquer! It's the only way you'll beat this… thing

parts is a straightforward task but the levels soon take the form of complicated mazes full of winding paths and dead ends. Some, like the area in Act 3, cunningly hide all the items and enemies, which can only be revealed by using the snake's encircling attack to destroy the floor and expose whatever lies beneath. Certain levels even contain multiple secret exits that whisk our snakey hero off to alternate levels and allow *Gomola Speed* to be replayed in different orders much like a classic *Mario* game. The level design truly comes into its own, however, during the boss battles as the snake takes on giant enemies that can fire lethal projectiles at it. These mazes are designed in such a way that there's usually one spot where the snake can safely hide whilst also luring the boss towards it and into a sneaky bomb trap.

Finally special mention must go to the sounds of *Gomola Speed* as although the graphics are distinctly average the music is of a very high standard. Almost every level features has it's own individual theme tune that would give even some of the best Commodore 64 soundtracks a run for their money. There are a surprising number of ear-pleasing tunes squeezed on to this tiny game card, making it worth checking out for fans of 8-bit chip music.

PC Engine owners who are looking for something different to the usual identikit shoot-'em-ups will find that *Gomola Speed* is well worth checking out. Whilst the Nintendo Wii will be providing PC Engine games for download, *Gomola Speed* is so obscurely known that we doubt it will ever appear on the Virtual Console service. Thankfully then, it's surprising to find that the actual Hu-Card is neither rare nor expensive, so there's no excuse not to add it to your collection.

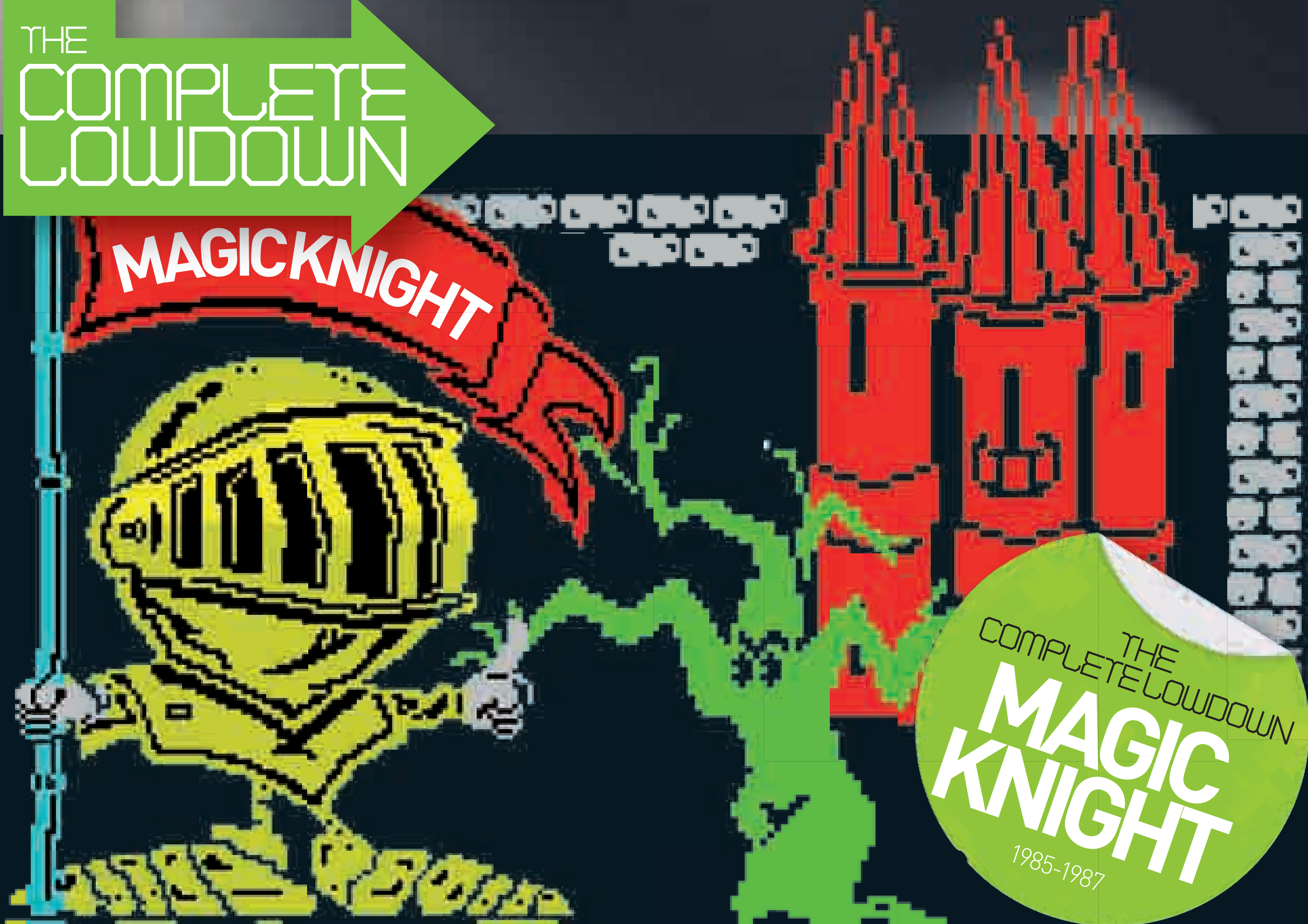


» Enemies aren't too smart so it's easy to use the walls to hide from them

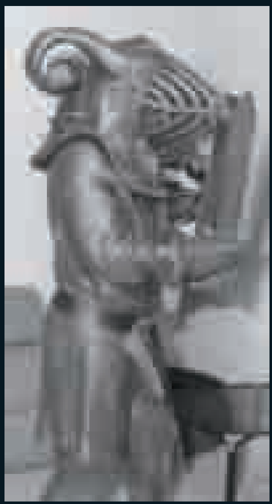
私を読み、私に書くことができ、私に知らせれば好みのゲームはある

THE COMPLETE LOWDOWN

MAGIC KNIGHT



WHEN IT COMES TO BUDGET GAME HEROES EVERYONE REMEMBER DIZZY. BUT CONSIDER THIS: BY THE TIME THE EGG-SHAPED ONE ROLLED ONTO THE SCENE IN 1987, MASTERTRONIC'S MAGIC KNIGHT HAD ALREADY RETIRED FROM THE SCENE HAVING STARRED IN A SUCCESSFUL SERIES OF REASONABLY-PRICED ADVENTURE GAMES. MARTYN CARROLL LOOKS BACK AT THE MAGIC KNIGHT QUADRILOGY AND TALKS EXCLUSIVELY TO ITS CREATOR, DAVID JONES.



» It was rare for Mastertronic to publicise its games, but getting David to dress up as Magic Knight was too good an opportunity to miss

You could be forgiven for thinking that David Jones is slightly reticent on the subject of Magic Knight. After all, this is the first time he's spoken publicly about the character in almost 20 years.

The truth, however, is that for most of these years he's been busy developing console games, first at Psygnosis and later at Acclaim. He finally left the industry in 2002 and these days he's a semi-retired property landlord and part-time saxophonist in a local blues band. So now he has both the time and inclination to reflect on his auspicious early career in gaming, and in particular the creation of Magic Knight, one of the most popular characters of the 8-bit era.

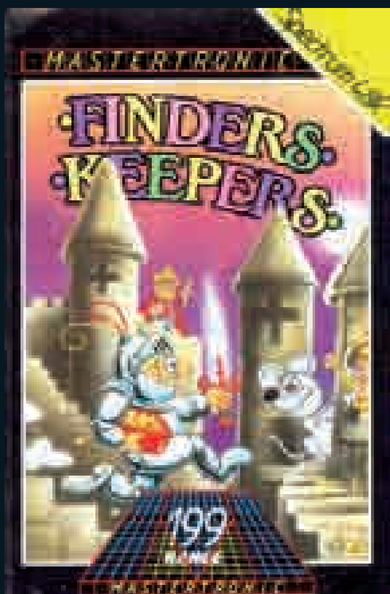
CODE SHOP

David was first introduced to programming while on a quantity surveying course in 1979. "I really enjoyed it," he says, "so I bought myself a Video Genie. It was a cheap Tandy TRS-80 clone with a built-in tape deck. I quickly produced my first game in BASIC, using the crude graphics available at the time. I was quite pleased with it, but it was slow. Somebody at my local computer shop suggested that I needed to learn machine code, which I did. At this point it was still all hobby stuff."

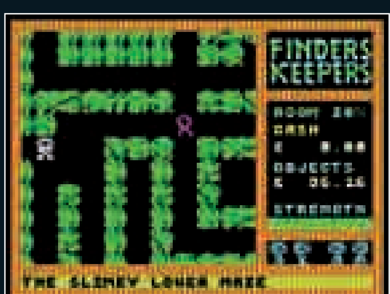
That was soon to change though. Having been made redundant a few years later he decided to work for himself and began programming for the Sinclair Spectrum. Rather than spend hours on end prodding the Spectrum's rubber keyboard, he used a custom interface to connect the Speccy's expansion slot to the printer port of his shiny new TRS-80 Model III. "It was convenient because both the Spectrum and the TRS-80 had their ROM in the lower address range so I could assemble code on the TRS-80 and dump it into the same memory addresses on the Spectrum. A few of us used TRS-80s in those days for this reason and also because it had a proper keyboard, decent development software (for the time) and disk support. I had two 180k disk drives and a massive 15Mb Hard Drive which was the size of a modern PC base unit and cost a mere £2,000!"

With this killer piece of kit in place, David soon became well known in his local Tandy

"THERE WERE NO STORYBOARDS OR SCHEDULES OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT. I STARTED WITH A ROUGH IDEA AND MADE THE REST UP AS I WENT ALONG" DAVID JONES



» The cartoon cover was reminiscent of *Ocean's Hunchback*, but there was much more to *Finders Keepers* than leaping over battlements



» With its different gameplay elements, *Finders Keepers* was a title that could not easily be pigeonholed

shop. "They had a kind of floating computer club where interested people would swap ideas or bits of code they'd written," he remembers, striking up similarities with Matthew Smith's path into programming. "One day a guy named Albert Owen asked the shop owners if they knew anybody who could write games; he was looking to build a games company and needed programmers. So I met him and started writing stuff."

The company was Procom Software, based in Essex, and David's first published game was *Bonkers*, a fast-paced *Frogger* clone for the 16k Spectrum. This promising effort was followed by a couple of programming utilities – Dynamic Graphics and Dynamic Programming. In his heart, however, he was a huge fan of text adventures, particularly those of Scott Adams, but he found it frustrating playing them on the Spectrum's clumsy keyboard. To this end he set about creating an adventure game that could be controlled using a joystick.

A KIND OF MAGIC

With the basic game concept in place, and Albert's son Ray onboard as the graphics artist, it took David just 12 weeks to write the finished game. The result was a graphic adventure that deftly mixed platforming and puzzle elements, with a couple of scrolling maze sections thrown in for good measure. The star of the show was Magic Knight, who was based on a piece of character art that Albert Owen had plucked from a public domain art book. With the knight in shining armour selected and the castle setting, the noble quest (to join the famed 'Polygon Table') naturally followed. "There were no storyboards or schedules or anything like that. I started with a rough idea and made the rest up as I went along." At the time Procom was struggling to publish its own products, so Albert discussed the then unnamed game with a few companies. "It was Mastertronic who saw the potential," says David, "although it suggested a few additions as it thought the title could work in its educational range if the objects had a monetary value that could be added up!" So David quickly introduced the ability to combine and trade valuable objects for profit.

The only thing the game now lacked was a title. A typically shrewd Mastertronic decided on *Finders Keepers*, simply because there was a madcap comedy film of that name around at the time. "Mastertronic thought it could get some free publicity for this totally unconnected game!"

In hindsight Mastertronic needn't have bothered with marketing tricks, as *Finders Keepers* was a great game in its own right that went on to become one of the company's best selling titles. From the £1.99 retail price David received a royalty rate of just ten pence per unit, but when you consider that the game sold over 330,000 copies, it wasn't bad money for three months work! Both parties were extremely chuffed with the results so Magic Knight was buffed up and sent off in search of more treasure.

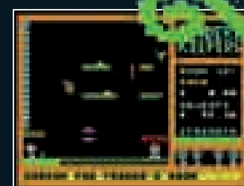
MAD FOR IT

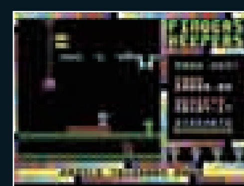
Following the extraordinary success of *Finders Keepers*, David was given complete editorial control over the making of the sequel. "Mastertronic told me: 'You write it and we'll sell it, just let us know when it's almost ready so we can get previews arranged'. So I wrote what I wanted."

Five months later and the game was finished. Entitled *Spellbound*, the sequel was a significant step up from *Finders Keepers*. It featured a larger game map, bigger and better graphics, multiple characters, even more devious puzzles, and an abundance of wit. Crucially, David also developed a new on-screen menu system – coined Windimation – that made it much easier to interact with objects and characters. "I saw the Apple Mac interface for about five minutes before rushing off home to knock up a Spectrum version! I quickly realised I could use a windowed menu system to construct text-based commands without having to stop and type. That added a lot of flexibility to the sort of games I could write."

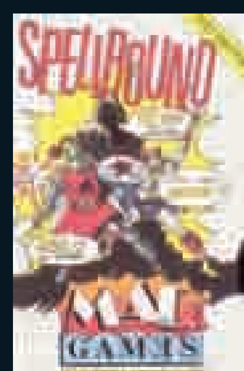


» In *Spellbound* your first job was to locate the Wand of Command, providing you with the power to command other characters

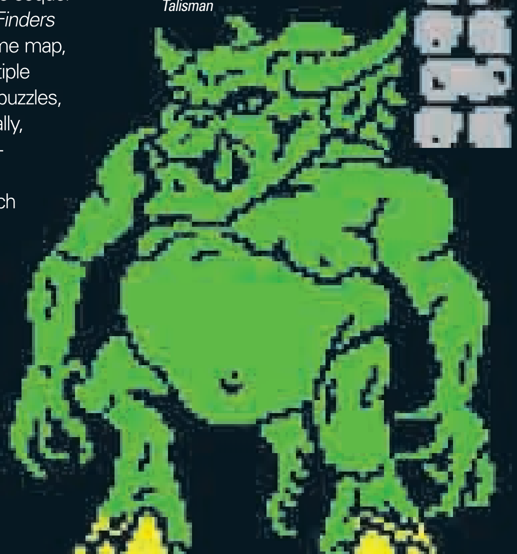




» The Commodore 64 version of Finders Keepers in all its glory



» The games that launched Mastertronic's MAD range were *Spellbound*, *The Last V8*, *Master Of Magic* and *Hero Of The Golden Talisman*



THE COMPLETE LOWDOWN



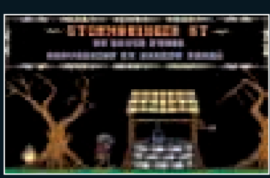
» *Knight Tyme* first appeared on the Spectrum 128k with a scaled-down 48k version appearing a month later

STORMBRINGER ST

In 1988 a version of *Stormbringer* was released for the Atari ST, marking Magic Knight's only appearance on a 16-bit machine. Ported by Andrew Shore, the conversion featured detailed and colourful graphics, as you'd expect, but it didn't exactly push the Atari ST's capabilities.

"It was nice and pretty," says David, "but if I'd written it myself I would have added a lot more as the ST could handle all the things the Spectrum couldn't. I'd have had a real-time ongoing update of the status during menu use, significantly better character interaction and way more animation. However, it was a good, faithful port."

The game advertised that ST versions of *Spellbound* and *Knight-Tyme* would follow but neither materialised due to less-than-stellar sales of Mastertronic's 16-bit titles.


» *Stormbringer* on the Atari ST was something of a missed opportunity. One for fans of the series only

The sequel was such a gaint leap forward that Mastertronic launched the game in October 1985 on its new MAD label. MAD stood for Mastertronic Added Dimension and was reserved for games that were a cut above the usual budget offerings. Despite glowing reviews from the gaming press, *Spellbound* shifted less than half the number of units as *Finders Keepers*, but thanks to the higher price point of £2.99, it was still a considerable success.

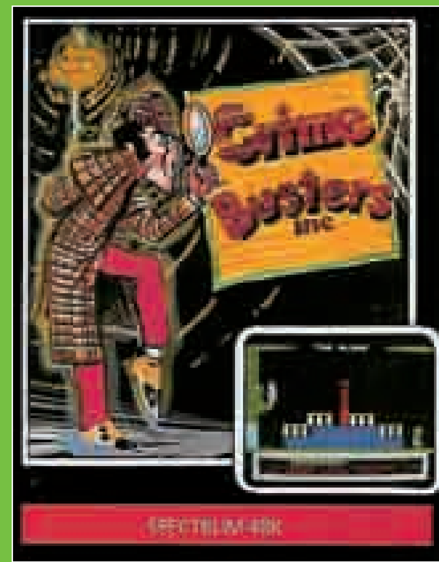
By this time the two Magic Knight games had been ported to most of the 8-bit platforms. As was the norm at Mastertronic, other programmers carried out the conversions. "I took very little interest in the other versions apart from when the royalty cheques arrived as it was a nice bit of extra money!" he laughs. Besides, he was busy developing the third game in the series, *Knight-Tyme*, which was set aboard a space ship in the far-off future.

Knight-Tyme was much more than just *Spellbound* in space however. In a bid to raise the bar further, the game was developed for the newly released 128k Spectrum. Whereas publishers like Ocean and Odin simply released enhanced versions of existing titles, David forged ahead with a game built specifically for the new machine.

LIFE OF CRIME

If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery then David Jones must have been beaming from ear to ear when IJK software released *Crime Busters*, a carbon copy of *Spellbound* featuring the same puzzles, the same menu system and even the same built-in hacker protection scheme. The situation came to light when IJK sent a review copy to Sinclair User staff writer Jim Douglas, who immediately noticed the similarities between the two games and dobbed IJK in.

Mastertronic's management weren't exactly thrilled by this blatant rip-off and demanded that the game was immediately withdrawn from sale. IJK complied with the order and plagiarising programmer Harry Price had to write a grovelling letter of apology. At least the cheeky scamp had a fine sense of irony, naming the game *Crime Busters*…



» It wouldn't take a Sherlock Holmes to solve this barefaced crime

"It wasn't a commercial decision," he says, "I just wanted to play with the new Spectrum and write a bigger game, then just chop out the bits I liked least to fit it into the 48k version later on."

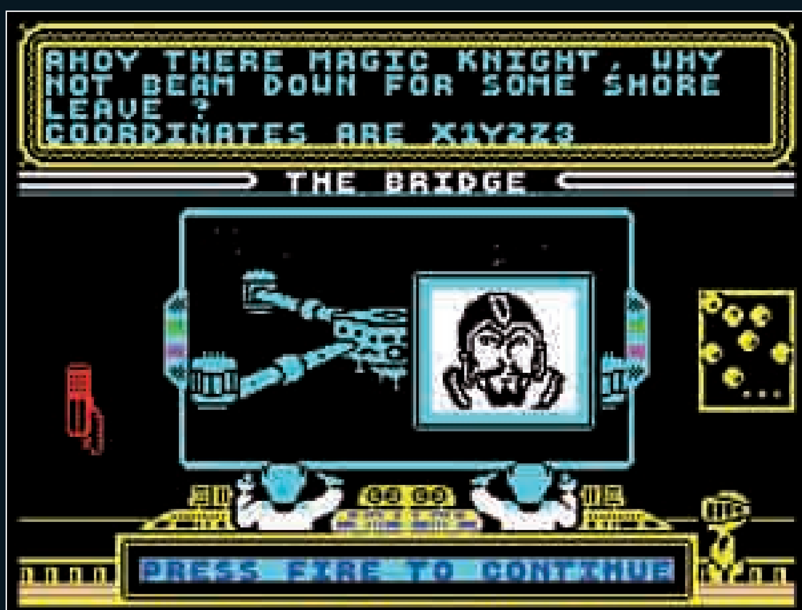
STORMY KNIGHT

Knight-Tyme debuted in May 1986, hot on the heels of *Spellbound*, but it would be a full year before the fourth Magic Knight title, *Stormbringer*, would appear. David explains that he slowly began to lose interest once he'd overcome all the technical hurdles: "*Knight-Tyme* had significant internal improvements on the game system and I was still interested in developing it then. By the time I got to *Stormbringer* the system was complete and it was too easy to knock out another game, so I took ages to finish it as I was a bit bored. Plus, the people at Mastertronic had changed and it wasn't as much fun anymore. That's what made me decide to retire her when I did." Did you spot that? Retire her? "Magic Knight was always female," he reveals. "If I'd written the fifth game that was going to be the big reveal at the end."

And what about the fifth game? Were there any other surprises in store? "I didn't develop it that much," he answers when pressed. "I was going to move back to ancient times though and I was intending to shift to the Atari ST as the main platform."

He then springs another shock, saying that he hasn't ruled out Magic Knight's return: "I'd be interested in getting involved with a new series if it could be done with minimal scheduling. I'd need a few good programmers and artists who are up for it, and a good chunk of editorial control. I suppose I'd have to plan it all and do an overall game design, but I've worked with teams at Psygnosis and Acclaim so I know how it's done these days."

He pauses, thinks back to the "good old days" for a few seconds, then stops and smiles. "Writing games for a living can be great fun."

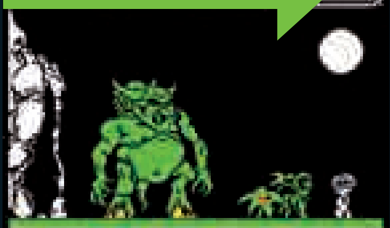


» Once you are in command of the ship you can visit the nearby Starbase 1 and beam down using the onboard 'transporter'

"I SAW THE APPLE MAC INTERFACE FOR ABOUT FIVE MINUTES BEFORE RUSHING OFF HOME TO KNOCK UP A SPECTRUM VERSION! I QUICKLY REALISED I COULD USE A WINDOWED MENU SYSTEM TO CONSTRUCT TEXT-BASED COMMANDS WITHOUT HAVING TO STOP AND TYPE. THAT ADDED A LOT OF FLEXIBILITY TO THE SORT OF GAMES I COULD WRITE" DAVID JONES


» In one of *Stormbringer*'s more inspired moments, you had to sneak into the castle by wearing a special disguise

DO YOU
REMEMBER
WHEN…



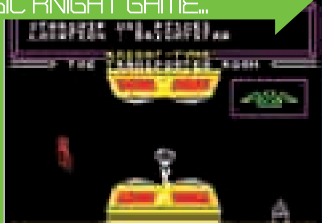
BEARWOOLF'S A TEDDY BEAR?
In *Stormbringer* Bearwoolf kills Magic Knight if you attempt to pass, but Robin of Shylock shoots the beast with a silver arrow, turning it into a cuddly teddy bear. The bear then latches onto Magic Knight, crying "Mama! Mama! Teddy is scared!" every time you pick it up.



» *Stormbringer* favoured fantasy cover art over the cartoon style of the earlier games

PLAY THIS…

IF YOU PLAY ONE
MAGIC KNIGHT GAME…



KNIGHT-TYME on the spectrum 128K
The third Magic Knight game is a fantastic voyage and the Spectrum 128k release is the best version, with more locations, additional characters and an amazing in-game tune by sound supremo David Whittaker. At just £2.99 it was great value and the first 'proper' game for new Spectrum.

MAGIC KNIGHT FAMILY TREE

FINDERS KEEPERS

System: Spectrum/CPC/C64/C16/MSX • **Year Released:** 1985

Finders Keepers is best viewed as a prequel to the 'Windimation' trilogy. The emphasis is on arcade action as the castle is packed with nasties that need to be avoided. The slick maze sections and the trading element lift the game above myriad identikit platformers around at the time, and while it won't take you long to find all the treasure and escape from the castle, it's worth the price tag. Magic Knight's first adventure deservedly became Mastertronic's third best-selling original game after *Formula 1 Simulator* and *BMX Racers*.

SPELLBOUND

System: Spectrum/CPC/C64/Atari 800 • **Year Released:** 1985

Having escaped from the Castle of Spriteland in *Finders Keepers*, Magic Knight must travel to the Castle of Karn and rescue Gimbal the Wizard. *Spellbound* is a dream sequel; key to its success is the Windimation menu system that lets you quickly enter fairly complex commands. Another addition is the cast of supporting characters, although having to command them to eat, drink and be happy does wear thin after a while. Some of the puzzles are a bit random too, but in the context of 8-bit gaming *Spellbound* is a true graphic adventure.

No.1



No.2



KNIGHT-TYME

System: Spectrum/CPC/C64/MSX • **Year Released:** 1986

You begin *Knight-Tyme* as a stowaway on a starship who must find a way to return home. The game appears to follow the *Spellbound* formula. It's only after solving the first series of puzzles and taking control of the starship that the game finds its feet – it becomes a thrilling space quest, with you flying between planets, beaming down to look around, garnering clues, while all the time keeping an eye on the ship's fuel gauge. Throw in an enhanced version of Windimation, a save facility and a foot-tapping tune, and you've got the best of the Magic Knight games.

STORMBRINGER

System: Spectrum/CPC/C64/MSX/Atari 800 • **Year Released:** 1987

The final game sees Magic Knight, transported home in a time machine, split into two characters – one good and one bad. You have to track down and merge with your evil counterpart. Looking back, *Stormbringer* is too similar to *Spellbound*, with few of the touches that set *Knight-Tyme* apart. However, it does feature a couple of cracking puzzles – one involving levers and binary numbers. Most versions also feature an amazing multi-part theme by David Whittaker that never gets on your nerves. Overall *Stormbringer* is a satisfying conclusion to the series.

No.3



No.4



CONVERSION CAPERS

Hard Drivin'

HARD DRIVIN' WAS NOT A PARTICULARLY DYNAMIC GAME, BUT ITS RELEVANCE WAS NOT TO BE FOUND IN EXCITING GAMEPLAY. INSTEAD, IT WILL BE REMEMBERED FOR ITS TECHNOLOGICAL PROWESS, SO ADVANCED IT WAS ASSURED THE BROADEST SCOPE OF SUCCESS. BRINGING IT HOME WOULD GUARANTEE A BESTSELLER FOR ANYONE CAPABLE OF RECREATING ITS FUTURISTIC VISAGE.

Many of us, I'm sure, distinctly remember *Hard Drivin'* being a fantastic game. The cockpit cabinet offered the world's most realistic driving simulation via unbelievably reactive hardware and a never-before-seen 3D environment. The queues for a ride in Atari's interactive beast were long and justified, turning the arcade from a digital playground into a serious virtual reality experience.

Mike Day, a fledgling programmer at Binary Design who would be given the astronomical task of recreating *Hard Drivin'* on the lowly Spectrum, told us about his introduction to the digital tarmac of Atari's most important 3D experiment. "It took about six of us to carry the coin-op machine up three flights of stairs to get it in the office. We dropped it somewhat, and the seat section came loose a bit, but the game still worked." There aren't many programmers who would get to know the coin-ops they were to convert by lugging it up the stairs on their back. It was a fitting overture to the laborious, yet profoundly rewarding, experience of uncovering the Spectrum's 3D capabilities.

"I found *Hard Drivin'* to be genuinely innovative. I recall that even before playing it I had been terribly excited by magazine articles describing the game. The specs blew my mind – hundreds of flat-shaded polygons at 30 frames per second, all at 640x480 resolution!" Mike excitedly recalls, exemplifying the long forgotten astonishment we all felt when the great grandfather of the 3D genre was first unveiled.

"Having long been a fan of 3D computer animation, the notion of being able to draw 3D scenes in real time was enormously appealing. Though predated by many other 3D games, this was the first one that allowed me to feel that I was immersed in a world.

Looking back, it was a milestone that contributed a great deal to the 3D genre and to racing games, and goes down as one of my favourite titles of all time." This is the very essence of what *Hard Drivin'* was all about.

Most retro titles that enjoyed a similar success to Atari's driving extravaganza have, for the most part, retained their playability. In all honesty, the same cannot be said of *Hard Drivin'*, though this doesn't


» The unreleased *Street Drivin'* was to be the last in the series, and was quite prophetic of the way driving games would look ten years later.

alter its relevance. *Hard Drivin'* "the game" may fail to impress the modern player, but *Hard Drivin'* "the machine" was a pivotal event in arcade history. Mike explained where the game's appeal resided.

"Overall I found the driving experience to be thrilling and realistic. I think the game may have actually started out life as a driving simulator and as such it was obviously meant to be as realistic as possible within the limitations of the day. You can begin to get a sense of the enormity of the conversion task – perhaps even the futility!"

Although the coin-op's operational system wasn't much of a prototype for the 3D revolution close on its heels, it was a valuable experiment not only in the dynamics of polygon-based gaming, but in defining the limits of what players would accept in terms of realism. Arcade dwellers loved the concept of driving through a realistic world, but weren't thrilled about having to bugger around with the seat in order to do it.

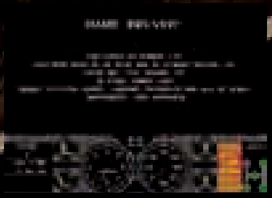
Nonetheless, the immensely enticing innovation of the machine made it a success, and as with all profitable arcade titles, home conversions were summarily ordered. But the challenge of converting *Hard Drivin'* was a distinctly unique one. Everything that made the arcade game a hit, such as the crystal-clear graphics and unique hardware were the first things to go, leaving only the limited gameplay for programmers to build their model upon.

If anyone had the relevant experience to realise the *Hard Drivin'* world on Sir Clive's rubber-keyed baby, it was Mike.

SOFT DRIVIN'

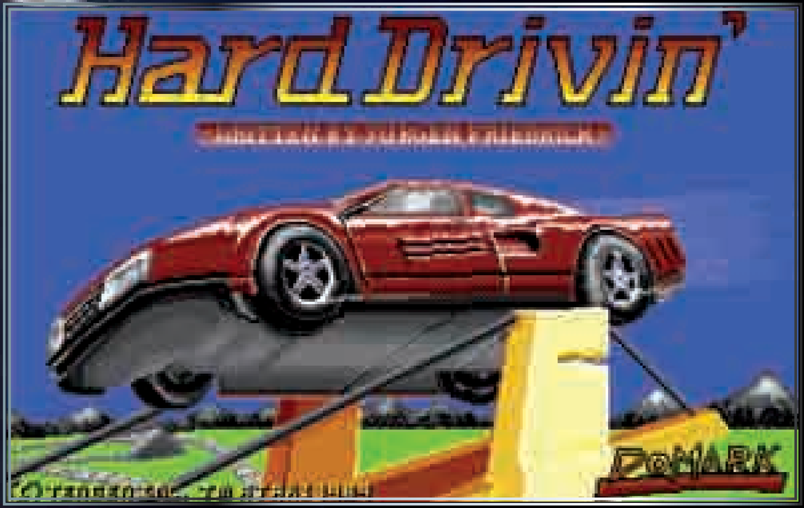
"In 1977, one of my best friends was given a Commodore PET for his birthday, and I was frequently invited over to help investigate this new toy and discover what could be done with it. A couple of years later I experienced much the same excitement over the launch of the Spectrum, which I used for all kinds of programming experiments in computer graphics (when I wasn't playing games), including wire frame displays of 3D objects and some simplistic mini-games of my own." Having splashed about in the shallow end of 3D Spectrum graphics, Mike was the authority-by-default at his

IN THE KNOW



» **PUBLISHER:** DOMARK
» **DEVELOPER:** BINARY DESIGN/ MIKE DAY
» **RELEASED:** 1988





» The most impressive aspect of the C64 game must surely be its loading screen. The actual game itself was dire beyond belief and only released as part of a driving compilation


» Mike Day. Still very active in the industry, he now lives in America working for Insomniac Games where he writes 3-D engine and effects software

WITH THE SMALL AMOUNT OF INFORMATION GLEANED FROM ATARI'S VAULT, A WELL PLAYED COIN-OP AND SOME NOTES HE'D MADE AT SCHOOL, MIKE WAS READY TO BEGIN

CONVERSION CAPERS

HARDWARE DRIVIN'

The first game to use an active, haptic steering mechanism ('force feedback'), the engineers at Atari went beyond the relatively simple task of applying motor-controlled resistance to the coin-op's steering mechanism.

The feedback system was not only tied to the adjustable seat's position, but increased and decreased the torque settings depending on the conditions of the car model, changing depending on the speed of the in-game vehicle.

The motor driver amp in the cockpit cabinet version was capable of delivering 400 Watts to the drive motor: about 1/2 horsepower! In a worst-case scenario, the steering wheel could spin at dangerously high speeds with an enormous amount of torque, so two high powered mechanical stops were installed capable of taking the full force of the motor.



» *Hard Drivin's Airborne* featured a flight school. That's how I'd like to learn about 'pull control', too



» The Amiga conversion was quite accurate and benefited from being controlled by the mouse

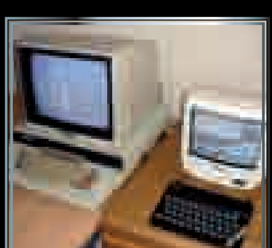


» "If you drove up the drawbridge and went slowly off the side, the car would start rocking and would suddenly be blasted vertically upwards into the stratosphere!" – Mike Day





» The only arcade sequel to be released: *Race Drivin'*. Four selectable tracks and four selectable cars couldn't quite bring the original's gameplay up to scratch



» Mike's Tatung Einstein connected up to a Speccy and running the *Hard Drivin'* development kit

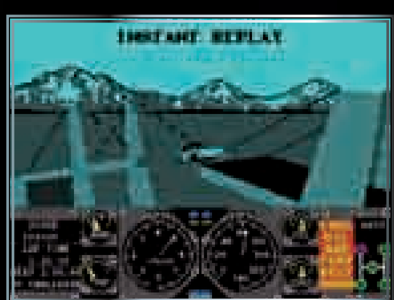
first place of employment, Binary Design. There was no precedent for building 3D, 8-bit environments, however, and as this was only his second game, it was a monumental task to continue the experiment Atari had begun with the original arcade title.

"Programming the 8-bit machines was something of a black art, which makes it exciting if you can do it. Moreover, I revelled in coding in Z80 assembly language. The excitement began in 1981 when I was shown the instruction manual for my school's Research Machines 380Z computer. The manual was on loan to the same friend who had the Commodore PET," recalls Mike, whose lifelong dedication to the Spectrum becomes increasingly apparent. He continues.

"In the back of the manual were some curious lists – strange abbreviations like "LD A,B" together with columns of numbers and letters. These were the Z80 opcodes, and though I wasn't quite sure what they were for, I found them so intriguing I copied them all out by hand – 28 pages of them! These handwritten lists would later act as the Z80 reference manual I used when coding *Hard Drivin'*, and are probably the most well thumbed pieces of paper I've ever seen." Getting started on these unformulated projects was incredibly tricky, and Mike explained his dependable philosophy when it came to conversions of original arcade games.

"There were three things to remember – play, play, and play! Clearly one must become familiar with every feature of the game – gameplay logic, bonus levels, cheats, and unless one is lucky enough to have the source code for the original, the only way to do this is to play it.

I don't remember any direct involvement from Atari, but there must have been some as a few items magically appeared. One was a map of the racing circuit drawn by hand on a large sheet of graph paper. Another was a graphics file containing the mountains used for the backdrop. This didn't get directly converted, but was used for guidance in the Spectrum version." A few fragments of geometry code were also acquired, providing Mike with a glimpse at how some of the coin-op's objects were built.



» The open drawbridge was the first, and simplest, of the obstacles on the stunt track, pictured here on the Spectrum version of the game

"I made use of the map, but I didn't directly use the geometry since it didn't fit into the storage and processing budget of the humble Speccy. It was all pretty familiar, except for one part – a peculiar humpback section of track of astronomical proportions. This later popped up in the sequel, *Race Drivin'*, but it would appear to have been cut from the first game." This is a story we've heard before, whereby home system programmers seem to be deliberately and inexplicably kept isolated from the originators of the arcade game – a short-sighted tact, though it did seem to catalyse the imagination of many conversion programmers.

With the information gleaned from Atari's vault, a well played coin-op and some notes he'd made at school, Mike was ready to begin fitting his conversion to Binary Design's loose schedule.

TIME BONUS

"Apart from simple wire frame graphics programmed in BASIC, I'd never written 3D code on the Spectrum, so I had to do things from the ground up. Graphically almost everything was drawn using flat-shaded convex polygons, so a fast polygon-fill was an absolute must." Doing anything fast on the Spectrum was difficult enough, so making it adept at handling polygons was a major feat. Binary Design apparently didn't appreciate the enormity of the task.

"No formal schedule had been drawn up (it was 1989 after all), except for the dates of 'Milestone 1', 'Milestone 2', etc,

ARCADE DWELLERS LOVED THE CONCEPT OF DRIVING THROUGH A REALISTIC WORLD, BUT WEREN'T THRILLED ABOUT HAVING TO BUGGER AROUND WITH THE SEAT IN ORDER TO DO IT



» The prototype second sequel, *Hard Drivin's Airborne*, featured a hybrid car/glider with equally realistic aeronautical attributes



» Even Atari's handheld hero, the Lynx, featured a conversion of *Hard Drivin'*. Quite an accurate one, too

EINSTEIN'S GAME

Mike still owns the Tatung Einstein development kit he used to create *Hard Drivin'*. He introduced us to his old friend and colleague.

"I used a Tatung Einstein for editing and assembling the Z80 code. Communication to the Spectrum was via RS232 using a ZX Interface 1. Though it wasn't a sophisticated way to develop code, it worked like a dream. There was a tiny basic program at the Spectrum end, too. So small, in fact, I usually just typed it in rather than loading it.

Binary sold off a couple of old Einsteins and of course I wanted one to use at home, so I bought one for about 40 quid. It was snowing when I carried it home one night, so I'd wrapped it in a bin liner. I obviously looked a bit suspicious because I got stopped by the police and had to talk my way out of it! Their suspicion was justified though as our office was later burgled, and the thieves made off with TVs and computers, which they lugged away in a handy container: my sleeping bag!"



without any specification as to what these might entail. To me, Milestone 1 meant completing a polygon-fill routine, plus rotation and clipping code. This implies I must have also written multiply, divide, and trig routines – a decent core to build on. To show this first milestone to my project manager, Nick Vincent, I set up a demo with a large filled polygon rotating in 2D on the screen, big enough to go off the screen edges and incur 2D clipping.

This clearly fell short of the Nick's expectations, and he came storming over from the other building to shout furiously at me! I can only assume he'd been expecting to see cars driving round a track." Despite management's less than understanding approach to Mike's work, he still wasn't given any back up to help him reach their nebulous goals, until he met another *Hard Drivin'* programmer.

"Towards the end of the game, I moved to London to work in the offices of the publisher, Domark, where I got to meet Jurgen Friedrich, programmer of the 68000 versions of the game. It was great to speak to someone about the game on a technical level, and we exchanged lots of good ideas, but I regret not having had this opportunity from the outset."

As publishing day drew closer, Mike had to begin making tough decisions about what he had time to incorporate from the arcade game he'd come to love.

"As I scrambled towards the end I was forced to add features less and less efficiently. I think there were plenty of omissions on the gameplay level – decent modelling of the car, the behaviour of other cars on the track, and a host of smaller details." Mike's achievements mustn't be denigrated in retrospect, however, as the Atari engineers had help from the world's foremost authority on car modelling when designing the original.

"The very last night of development took place at the tape duplicating facility in Surrey, where there was a programming station waiting for us to hastily hack in some code for sound effects. They were added just a couple of hours before the very end, even as the duplication machines were warming up.

Once the machines started rolling, our work was done and we set off home, but ran out of petrol near Basingstoke in the early hours of the morning." Just as Mike had a particularly poignant introduction to *Hard Drivin'*, his farewell – despite favourable magazine reviews of the finished game – was equally prophetic.

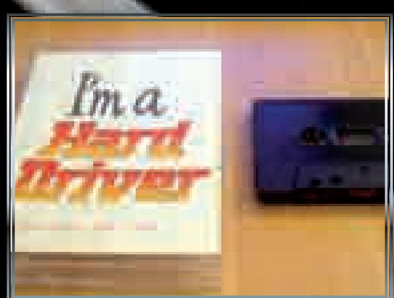
"I don't really feel I was up to the task of replicating the gameplay. The project would have worked out better had Binary been able to spare a second 'gameplay' programmer to work alongside me.

It fell quite short of my hopes. If I'd had double the development time I could have done a much better job, but that's the games industry for you!" This is a feeling that clearly permeates the entire range of *Hard Drivin'* games, from the original arcade, through its sequels (two of which went unreleased) and numerous conversions. It simply wasn't a particularly fun game, but it was an incredibly valuable experiment that not only helped shape, but also actively changed the direction of the entire games industry.

"I enjoyed it and when I think of 'the good ol' days' of programming, this is one of those episodes that always springs to mind. Over the years I've done more work in real-time 3D programming than I have in any other area, and although much has changed, there are plenty of fundamental principles of 3D graphics that will never go out of date, many of which I learned in the course of working on *Hard Drivin'*."



» A hand drawn map of the *Hard Drivin'* tracks from the original arcade game.



» A first run cassette of *Hard Drivin'* given to Mike Day by the duplicator. He didn't recieve a packaged version

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

MOTORBIKE MADNESS
SYSTEMS: ZX SPECTRUM, C64, AMSTRAD CPC
YEAR: 1988

MAX HEADROOM
SYSTEMS: ZX SPECTRUM, C64, AMSTRAD CPC
YEAR: 1986

AMAUROTE
SYSTEMS: ZX SPECTRUM, C64, AMSTRAD CPC, ATARI 8-BIT
YEAR: 1987

"IT FELL QUITE SHORT OF MY HOPES. IF I'D HAD DOUBLE THE DEVELOPMENT TIME I COULD HAVE DONE A MUCH BETTER JOB, BUT THAT'S THE GAMES INDUSTRY FOR YOU!" MIKE DAY

CONVERSION CAPERS

You certainly didn't forget the first time you laid eyes on Atari's impressive *Hard Drivin'* coin-op. Housed in a huge cabinet and equipped with a clutch, three pedals, steering wheel (complete with force feedback) and an ignition key, Atari's ginormous machine was like nothing else around and proved to be extremely popular, even if it did take a fair amount of concentration to play.

With so many arcade racers around at the time allowing you to tear through the countryside without a second thought, Atari's new game soon found itself receiving plenty of attention. Yes it was slower and not as pretty as its many peers, but the realism *Hard Drivin'* created was second to none. From the moment you climbed into the cab, adjusted the seat and turned that ignition key you were fully immersed in Atari's polygon world, and boy did it feel good. *Hard Drivin'* was unlike many other arcade games, as you couldn't just jump into it. You had to learn its intricacies, and discover the best way to handle its two distinct courses.

The Speed Track was perfect for motorheads who just wanted to race against the clock and earn the quickest possible times, while the adventurous Stunt Track was for those who wanted to live a little more dangerously. Filled with insane jumps, tight corners and that amazing loop-the-loop *Hard Drivin's* second course definitely wasn't for cissies and quickly sorted out the men from the boys. Try taking a jump or corner at the wrong speed for example and everything would abruptly end in tears, eventually culminating with a massive crack across your windshield. You'd then be given a replay of your humiliating spill for all to see. Ouch.

HOME CONVERSIONS

Considering the sheer power of the original arcade it was hardly surprising that the home computers and consoles weren't really up to the task of handling Atari's racer. That didn't stop the game from being released though, although practically every version failed to capture the exhilarating thrill of the original.

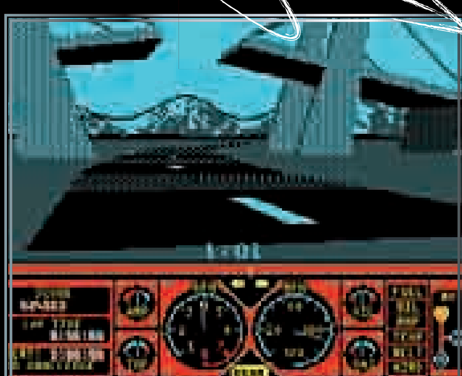
THE HARD DRIVIN' CONVERSIONS



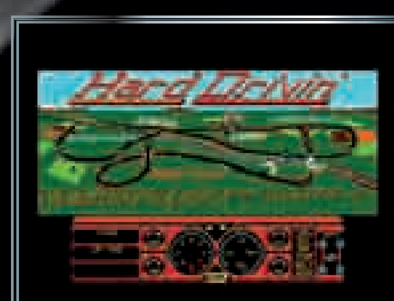
COMMODORE 64



The Spectrum and Amstrad versions were pretty average, but nothing will prepare you for the sheer travesty that is *Hard Drivin'* on the Commodore 64. It's a terrible, terrible game. Stuttery over-sensitive controls, horrendous graphics, no instant replays and a stupidly slow frame-rate ensured that this was a dire product. Such is its crumminess it's little wonder that it never received a full price release and received a miserable 20% from Zzap!64. Don't ever so much as contemplate playing this nightmare of a game.



AMSTRAD CPC



We're in Spectrum country folks. CPC owners sighed in frustration when they realised that they were once again being saddled with a quick and easy Spectrum port. Still, it's marginally better than the C64 port, and while everything is rather blue – the track and control screens are in full colour – at least it runs at a reasonable rate. Sadly, while the visuals are a little slicker than the Spectrum's, the controls are nowhere near as impressive. As a result you'll often find yourself fighting for control on even the slightest of curves.



SINCLAIR SPECTRUM



Hard Drivin' on the Spectrum was never going to win any awards for graphical excellence, but considering the work required to cram Atari's coin-op into 48 kilobytes the end results are okay.

Of course, they're not great either and while the Spectrum does a reasonable job, it's not without its drawbacks. *Hard Drivin'* is a sluggish experience that fails to capture any of the excitement of its arcade parent. Shame.



AMIGA



The real advantage the Amiga had over other conversions was an alternative controller. Still a far cry from the coin-op hardware, driving with the mouse was an improvement over a digital joystick. The environment translated well, yet despite some well painted polygons and a cow that still moo'ed when you ran it over, the steady pace and grating difficulty level meant the Amiga only succeeded in reducing *Hard Drivin'* from full on dental torture to half an hour of chewing tin foil.



MEGA DRIVE



This was as good as it got. Sega bods made some bold decisions when it came to their console conversion. Since a perfect rendition was impossible, they decided to stuff the complex mechanics and realistic car models up the exhaust pipe. Instead, they sped the gameplay up, made it a lot easier and did what they could to inject a bit of entertainment. The Mega Drive came closest to saving the reputation of the arcade giant.



ATARI LYNX



While the visuals are pretty swish and run at a decent rate, the trade-off is that the landscapes are far more barren and there is less traffic on the road. Still, it's a surprisingly accurate conversion and looks pretty good on the Lynx's small screen. Unfortunately, the controls are more sensitive than a pre-pubescent teenager and you'll find yourself constantly skidding and sliding across the road as you desperately try and gain some sort of control over your erratic vehicle. Still, it does provide some entertaining cutscenes and it certainly looks the part. Worth a look if you can find it on the cheap.

OTHER VERSIONS TO CONSIDER

ATARI ST
PC MS-DOS
XBOX (2004) MIDWAY ARCADE TREASURES 2
GAMECUBE (2004) MIDWAY ARCADE TREASURES 2
PLAYSTATION2 (2004) MIDWAY ARCADE TREASURES 2
PC WINDOWS (2004) MIDWAY ARCADE TREASURES



GOLDEN AXE

IF ONLY ALL JOURNEYS WERE THIS FANTASTIC



- **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- **RELEASED:** 1989
- **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ARCADE
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £35+ FOR ORIGINAL PCB BOARD



HISTORY

Golden Axe is a strange game. It's not the greatest side-scrolling beat-'em-up ever made, and it rips off plenty of other superb titles, but good grief, is it fun to play through. After all, what other game from the era allowed you to carve up skeletons, ride around on mythical creatures and cast powerful magic? None, that's what.

While the likes of *Rastan* and *Rygar* featured a similar theme neither contained the fantastical environments that *Golden Axe* boasted. Indeed, in the half hour it took me to complete the game (I've still got the magic touch) I visited a besieged village, journeyed across the back of a giant turtle, before finally flying to Death Adder's domain via a gigantic flying eagle. Quite a journey I'm sure you'll agree.

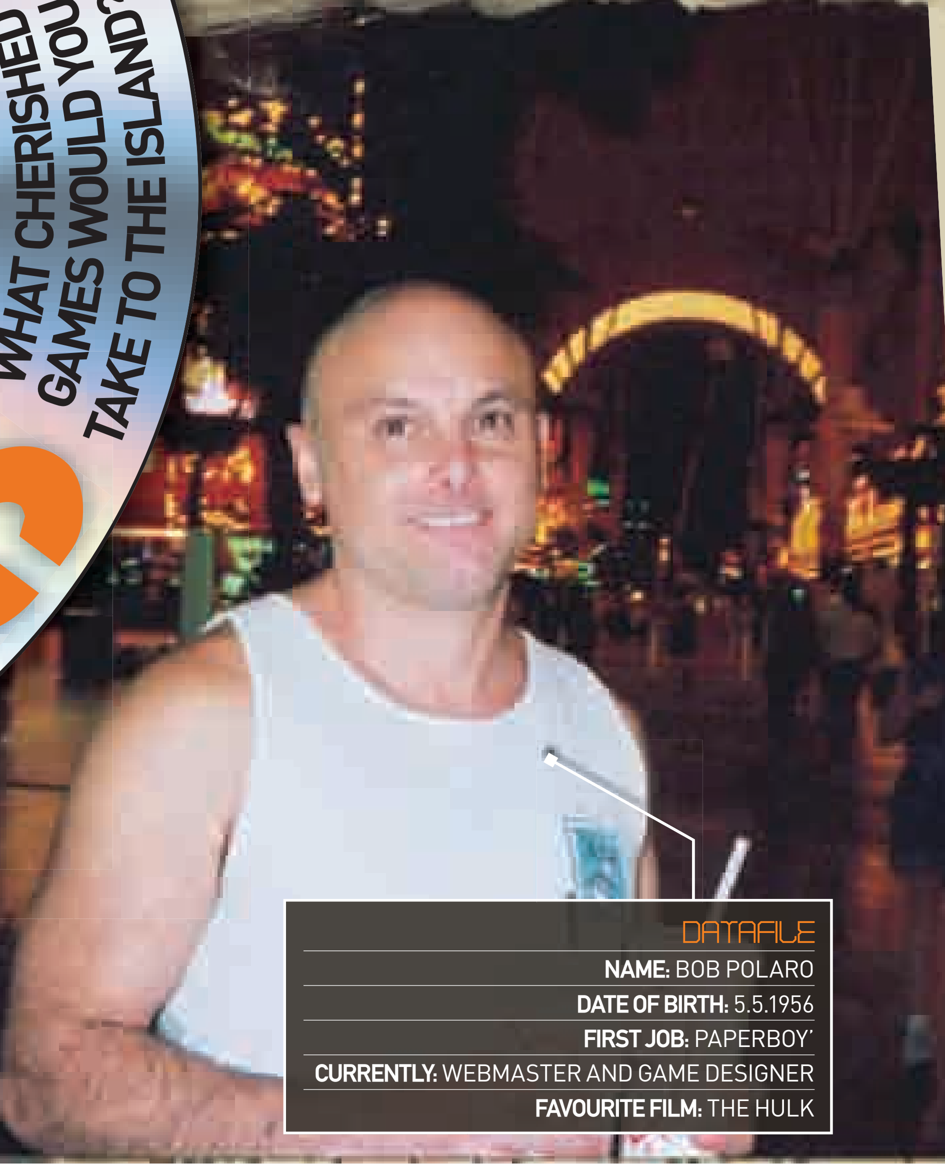
The enemies you face are no less exotic and consist of Harryhausen-styled skeletons (some of the hardest foes in the game by the way) mace-wielding giants, busty Amazonians and gigantic, armour-clad knights that carry swords longer than your actual character. Yikes! Then, of course, there's the final showdown with old Black Adder himself: a huge monstrosity of a man who wields the titular Golden Axe.

Your able warriors, the stout Dwarf Gilius Thunderhead, beefy barbarian Ax Battler and the sexy Tyris Flare are more than able to deal with Black Adder's minions, and if you get bored of hacking them up with swords and axes you can always hop on the back of one of *Golden Axe*'s many mythical beasties and smoke 'em with a handy fireball. If all else fails then there's your magic potions to rely on. Each warrior favours a certain element: lightning for Gilius, earth for Ax and Fire for Tyris, which can be powered up by kicking the occasional pixie in the arse and grabbing it's dropped potion. Who says crime doesn't pay? When your gauge is finally filled you can let rip with anything from a minor earthquake to summoning this big fella on the right. I love the smell of burning Black Adder in the morning…


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CREDITS 5
PUSH 2P STAR
1

DESERT ISLAND DISKS

WHAT CHERISHED GAMES WOULD YOU TAKE TO THE ISLAND?



DATAFILE

NAME: BOB POLARO

DATE OF BIRTH: 5.5.1956

FIRST JOB: PAPERBOY'

CURRENTLY: WEBMASTER AND GAME DESIGNER

FAVOURITE FILM: THE HULK



» Bob featured in a very early version of *Mole Attack*…

BOB POLARO

HE BEGAN CODING IN THE DAYS OF PAPER TAPE, HAD HIS OWN PET AT COMMODORE AND DEFENDED HIS HONOUR AT ATARI. A VETERAN OF THE VCS AND STILL WAGGLING JOYSTICKS THREE DECADES ON, MEET THE CHARMING AND CHILLED BOB POLARO.

I could listen to Bob Polaro all day. His West Coast drawl, his easy banter, his laidback recounting of Atari's halcyon days… all I need is a Pina Colada and I could imagine I'm there in Sunnyvale, California at Atari HQ circa 1983. I've seen pictures of Bob from back then, dressed in his typical attire of T-shirt, shorts and sandals. Surely his relaxed attitude and wardrobe mean he must have fitted in perfectly with the crazy, chilled-out crew that populated the company at its creative zenith?

"Oh no, I felt out of my league," Bob corrects me. "I found everyone was just so super-intelligent. I was surrounded by all these scientific minds, with years of hardware experience and Masters Degrees and there I was, an ex-BASIC programmer with no real engineering experience and less education. But they were all my friends and they helped me. And I could get the job done, by banging my head against the wall…"

Some painful honesty and typical modesty from Bob, as that BASIC experience came with a certain pedigree. Born in the mid-Fifties in Orlando, Florida, his first taste of computing was fleeting encounters with paper-spewing IBM mainframes in High School. Having discovered programmers could earn up to $10 an hour though, his mind was made up and he spent a year and a half after leaving college producing business software on the fantastically named WANG computer.

"That machine was pretty similar to the PET and it led to a job with Commodore," he explains. "It was 1978 and they wanted to get into games. They assigned me a Blackjack project and I also did this Baseball game for them…"

Bob recalls with some affection the PET's glowing green screen and the crude ball player graphics he fashioned out of ASCII characters. They caught the eye of another expanding company and before the year was out, he'd been recruited by Atari.

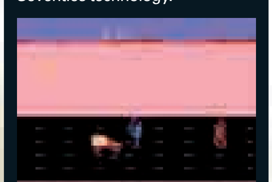
"They were doing a home computer and had me working on the prototype. They hired me because of my experience with BASIC games on the PET, so they'd have something ready for when they were ready to launch the machine and I enjoyed cranking them out."

Bob duly produced educational titles like *Hangman* and *States And Capitals*, plus the bittersweet business sim *Lemonade Stand* for the Atari 400/800, but it was clear that if he wanted to stay working there, he would need to master the language of assembly and move onto programming the VCS. "I had

YOU MUST PLAY…

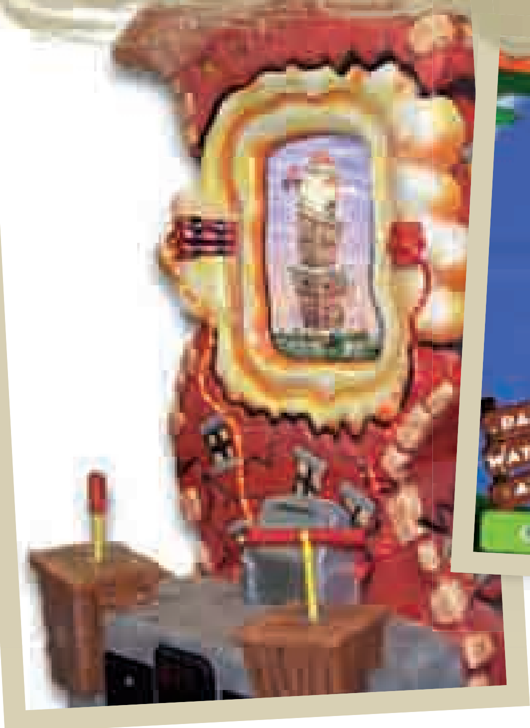
On The Road

Suitably fast and able to make the strongest of wrists ache, *Road Runner* is a simple 'dodge or die' bit of fun. Wile E. Coyote launches various fiendish gadgets at your beeping bird and with some strategic swerving, you can give your pursuer a taste of his own ACME medicine. Released in 1989 as one of the final official titles for the Atari 2600, it shows how an old hand could still hack out a decent game in the 16-bit era on Seventies technology.





» Bob dipped his toe in the water of SNES development with *Bass Masters Classic*





» **Top left and right:** *Blast It* and *Hoppin' Harry* – two of the many 'one hand' games Bob created for players with a Budweiser in the other…





» **Above:** *Bugs Bunny* and *Holey Moley* – two of Bob's 'lost and found' games

"EVERY WEDNESDAY I'D DRIVE TO THE BEACH WITH A CONTAINER OF SCREWDRIVER AND PLAY BEACH VOLLEYBALL. I JUSTIFIED IT AS RESEARCH" BOB POLARO

to pick it up quickly, but I could learn from others there. Warren Robinett [*Adventure*] and Jim Huether [*Steeplechase*] really helped me get going. It was still relaxed then. There wasn't a lot of money at that stage. People were having fun, not feeling pressured and there were no deadlines."

Bob got up to speed working on *Stunt Cycle*, his first project for the Atari 2600. He learned fast and soon got a bike jumping over blocks, despite the challenge of reading the paddle controller inputs, as management had perversely demanded that the rotary devices should be used for revving up the engine. The game was nearing completion, when the powers that be had another bright idea.

"Atari was getting in to the whole licensing thing and *Dukes Of Hazzard* was kind of big. The bike became an orange car and now it was jumping over a lake!"

Sadly, the General Lee belly flopped into the water and, not untypical for the time, the project was shelved. However, the experience had given Bob the confidence to take on another big licence. Eugene Jarvis's *Defender* was, of course, huge, but trying to translate an arcade title famed for its many enemies and sprawling array of controls, so that it would work with one joystick, a single button, five sprites and in 4K wasn't going to be easy.

"My main concern was how to get the laser shot from the ship. I tried different things – using the playfield or the missile sprite, but in the end I had to switch the ship, the player sprite, and just make it really big! What I was unable to do with hardware, I managed with the software. Plus they still allowed flicker at that time…" Bob came up with some ingenious solutions. Flying low and firing would trigger a smart bomb, doing the same at the top of the screen would initiate hyperspace and the problem of putting a swarm of angry aliens in your path was tackled by switching between the remaining four sprites he had at his disposal. It was a valiant effort and despite the horrendous flicker, played remarkably well, which might explain why it sold 3 million copies. He even squeezed in an Easter Egg – get to level 25 and fire on the 25th line to see all your adversaries turn into his initials 'BP' – but in retrospect, he knows he could have done more.

"At that point, we didn't have many ideas about how to do multi-coloured characters. That would've helped and I think I could have done it without the flicker."

The 'we' is telling. Bob paints a heart-warming picture of Atari as a gang of talented programmers, sharing their latest coding discoveries. And the team played together too.

"Every Wednesday, Jim Huether and I would drive over the hill to Santa Cruz and watch beach volleyball. We justified it as 'research' for the RealSports Volleyball project. We'd play too – just jungle ball with folks on the beach. We always brought a container of Screwdriver – Vodka and orange juice – which didn't really help the project but helped with the fun…"

Bob sobered up enough to get the game out, which proved to be another hit. Not all his efforts had such happy endings, mind. He produced *Bugs Bunny*, a cute kids game with mightily impressive graphics, which got canned thanks to management missing the point and playtesting it against *Snoopy* and the *Red Baron* with 12-14 year olds. Then there was *Holey Moley*, which cleverly utilised the child's numerical controller to replicate the thump of mallet on mole seen in the mechanical *Mole Attack* arcade games of yore.

"I think both of them were a lot of fun. I was trying to do stuff that was good for kids and non-super players, but marketing just didn't get them."

An admirable goal and thanks to www.atari2600.com, you can see what Bob was trying to achieve (see boxout). But things were changing at Atari. Financial mismanagement and ludicrous over-hyping brought the once mighty company to its knees. Enter the ruthlessly efficient Tramiels and the party was definitely over.

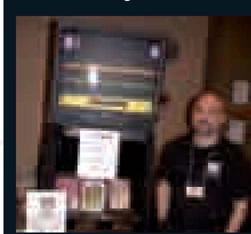
"I tend to stay working at a place till the walls come tumbling down," confesses Bob. "I just don't like moving. After the Tramiels bought the company, they sold half of it and sacked most of the staff, so there were only a few of us engineers left. They took away our offices and put us in cubicles, took away our phones, cut our salaries in half, replaced our development systems with PCs that didn't work and we had to wait forever for anything to happen. Yeah, the walls really were falling down…"

Time to hit the road, which is just what Bob did; he spent some time travelling before joining up with some friends developing games for the Commodore 64. He set up his own development company BOBCO (a corruption of 'Bob Co' – the nickname he'd earned due to his prolific software output) and produced the successful educational title *World Geography*. Bob wasn't quite ready to leave the old 2600 behind though and tackled a trio of projects on a freelance basis for Atari – *Desert Falcon*,

GAME NOT OVER

Having a project cancelled has always been something of an occupational hazard for programmers, but Bob seems to have been particularly unlucky. However, thanks to the good people at www.atari2600.com, his old codes for *Stunt Cycle, Bugs Bunny* and *Holey Moley* have been resurrected and available to buy on cartridge.

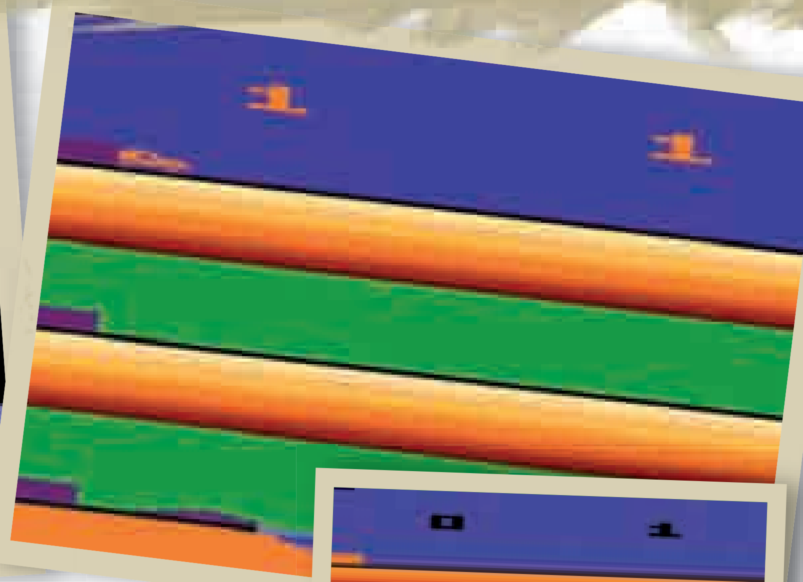
"It was nice to see them finally get out there," says Bob. "We sold them at shows in 2002. I was pleased to see there's a large cult following for classic games and there are people who still appreciate them. Maybe they're just appreciating the past. Technology is so sophisticated now – so much memory and 3D engines. No one's going to make dinosaurs when they can make Lamborghinis…"



» Showing off his rabbit wares at a classic gaming show in 2002



» *Defender* for the 2600 – blink and you'll miss 'em…





» *Stunt Cycle* and *Dukes Of Hazzard* – can you see what he did there?

SprintMaster and *Road Runner*. He also handled the conversion of *Rampage* for Activision. Hang on, wasn't that like sleeping with the enemy?

Bob giggles nervously. "Oh no, I worked at home on a contract basis and anyway, Atari weren't really doing much with the 2600 by then. That was a tough project, regardless of the platform. You could go anywhere on screen, jump from building to building… so many bugs could creep in. I think every version went over deadline. Was I happy with mine? Erm, well it worked…"

Right until the end of the Eighties, Bob was working his ancient alchemy on that trusty wood-grained console, but as the Nineties began, he did finally move up to the 16-bit machines. He spent two years leading the small team that produced *Bass Masters Classic* and *Pro* for the Super Nintendo, though by the time the sequel was complete, the SNES was dead in the water. The team did begin a version for the PlayStation and even started work on a scuba-diving game before publishers THQ pulled the plug.

As the decade drew to a close, Bob found himself once more doing what he does best – producing little nuggets of fun. He created over a dozen Video Redemption games to run on cabinets located in arcades and bars and converted many into Java for websites.

"I could turn round a game in a month or so, which was even quicker than in the VCS days. Any project that takes more than a year, you don't wanna even look at it anymore, but with a series of short term projects, each one is interesting. You just don't get sick of it."

And Bob has kept his coding fingers in numerous little pies. He now mainly creates websites for small businesses, though recently coded *Spider-Man* for a Jakks Plug and Play Joystick (see boxout). He seems happy to dip in and out of game design as opportunities arise, but knows that the industry has lost some of that innocent charm that made working at Atari in the early days so memorable.

"'Those were the best six years of my life,' he smiles. "We were all in our twenties, single, making money, partying together and just having so much fun making the games. It was like a college atmosphere and I felt like I hadn't had enough college."

So Bob, did you really get into the spirit of things and become a member of the infamous Marijuana Review Board at Atari that would meet secretly in the toilets to 'discuss important issues'? He refutes all knowledge of the MRB. Surely he's not going to do a Bill Clinton and deny inhaling?

Bob gives me one last relaxed chuckle. "Now, I'm not saying that…"

"THE TRAMIELS SOLD HALF OF ATARI, SACKED MOST OF THE STAFF, CUT OUR SALARIES IN HALF AND REPLACED OUR DEVELOPMENT SYSTEMS WITH PCS THAT DIDN'T WORK. THE WALLS REALLY WERE FALLING DOWN" BOB POLARO

WEB DESIGN

Despite spending most of his time nowadays constructing Internet sites, Bob turned his attention to a different sort of web design in 2004. He answered an ad from local company Santa Cruz Games and worked on a *Spider-Man* title for Plug and Play Joystick specialists Jakks.

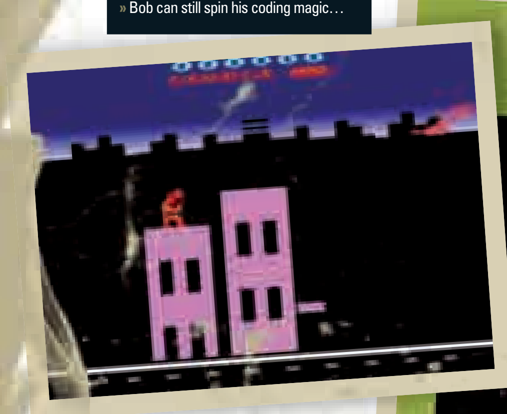
"It was the first time I wasn't the lead on a project and I had a lot to learn. The coding was based on engines you'd use for high end games and it meant a lot of long hours, but I really wanted to get it out. It was a challenge, but the satisfaction of finishing something that's difficult is just great. The challenge itself isn't much fun."

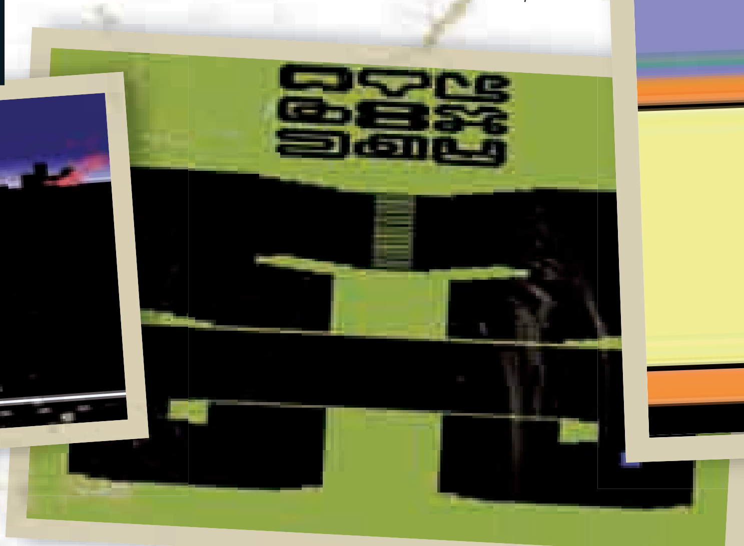
Undaunted, Bob now fancies getting his teeth into a mobile phone game. "I think they're close to my background. They don't require a large team and it's all about the gameplay. But there's a lot of politics and paranoia about which licences to get."

The more things change…



» Bob can still spin his coding magic…

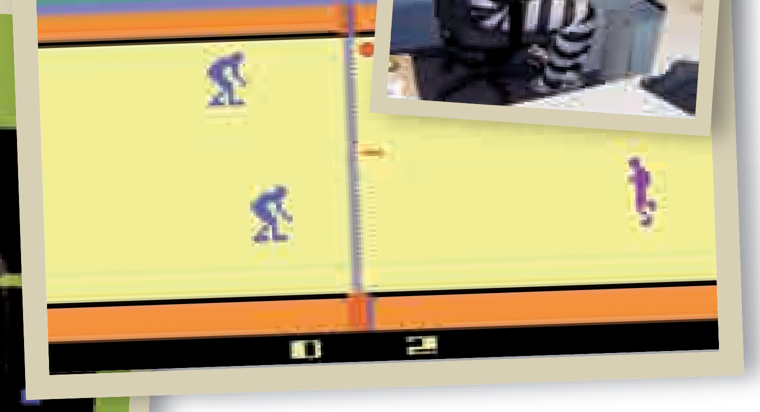




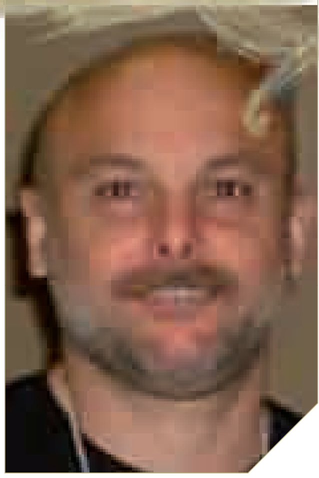
» *Rampage* and *Sprintmaster* – two of Bob's later, contract efforts



» Programming can be a life sentence…



» **Above:** *VCS Volleyball* – those blue players look like they've been on the Vodka too



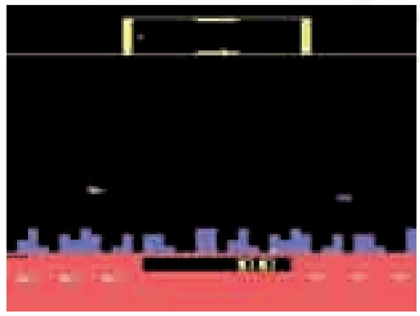
BOB POLARO DESERT ISLAND DISKS



SLUGGERS ALLEY

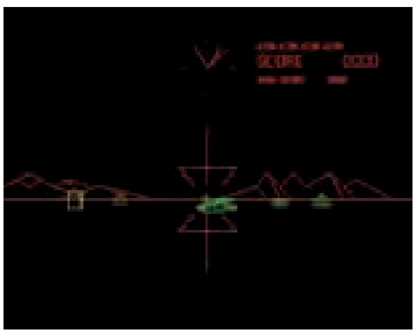
ARCADE

1 Originally it was a Video Redemption game, which ran on a standalone cabinet in MS DOS and I ended up modifying it for an Internet game. It was based on the old style mechanical baseball games you'd see in arcades and it had a good feel. There was something about when the ball hit the bat that felt mechanical. Hitting a home run and the fanfare was just great.



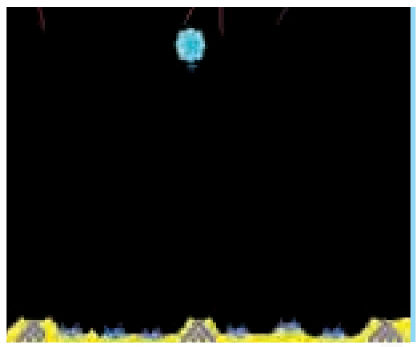
DEFENDER ATARI 2600

2 Yeah, I'll take my version. You could say it's been very, very good to me. I kinda want to keep it around. I wouldn't be that interested in playing it, but it's fun to show it off. Was it my biggest seller? Yes. Am I a millionaire? No.



BATTLEZONE ARCADE

3 Very simple graphics, but so fast and when you shot something… the explosion just felt so right. It was amazingly well designed. When something's shooting you from behind and you turn round and get them… way ahead of its time.



MISSILE COMMAND ARCADE

4 I consider this my favourite. When you put up that spread of explosions, that wave after wave structure… nothing compares. I knew Dave Theurer who designed it and he was an amazing guy. When I did *Defender*, it didn't bother me about mutilating it, as it wasn't one of my favourites, but *Missile Command* was and I knew I couldn't do it justice on the VCS.



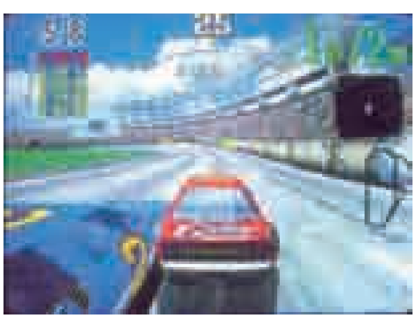
RAIR SEA BATTLE ATARI 2600

5 I like the feel of it, especially the version that let you guide the missiles in mid-air. It was designed by Larry Kaplan, who left for Activision after I'd started at Atari. He was a relaxed guy and a remarkable engineer. This had what I call 'The Factor'. After you'd played it, you'd press the reset button subconsciously and play it again and you wouldn't even know why.



SNAP SHOT ARCADE

6 A game that shows you a picture for a few seconds and you have to answer questions… you know, like how many muffins were in the pan or something. The sort of game you play in bars and I just kept playing it to get better. And yeah, maybe I did gravitate towards bars…



DAYTONA ARCADE

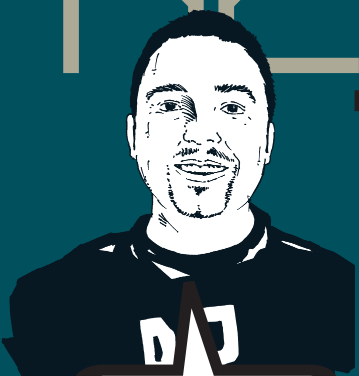
7 It's the one racing game I really enjoyed. I was introduced to it in Vegas at a CES show there. All these machines were lined up and people were queuing up to play it. At first I kept exploding and my face was up on screen as a loser, but I improved. Playing it against other people, knowing it's your friend out in front and then running them off the road… really addictive.



TETRIS GAMEBOY

8 My favourite 'pastime' game. There are just so many platforms you can play it on, from Game Boy to PS2. An incredibly well designed game – the ultimate puzzle game. No, I'm not really good at it – my lady friend is always beating me…

RETRORATED



With the price of GBA games coming down all the time it's now possible to get some real bargains. We've covered the platforming and RPG genres, so here are a few of the GBA's run 'n' gun titles to either buy or avoid.

CONTRA ADVANCE: THE ALIEN WARS EX

INFORMATION

- **PUBLISHER:** KONAMI
- **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £20

Konami's *Contra Spirits*, or *Super Probotector* as it was known here, is one of the greatest (if not the greatest) run 'n' gun title to have been released on the SNES.

So imagine how mortified we were when we discovered how badly Konami had butchered it for its Game Boy Advance release.

You're no longer able to switch between two different weapons, the playing area is far too cramped and the screen-filling smart bombs are nowhere to be seen. Worst of all, the amazing Mode 7 sections are entirely missing and have been replaced by levels from the Mega Drive game *Contra: Hard Corps*.

Yes it looks great, and you can link up if you have a second cartridge, but this is a real missed opportunity. Shame. We had high hopes.

OVERALL **62%**



» This still makes us go all tingly …

GUNSTAR FUTURE HEROES

INFORMATION

- **PUBLISHER:** THQ
- **DEVELOPER:** TREASURE
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £19.99

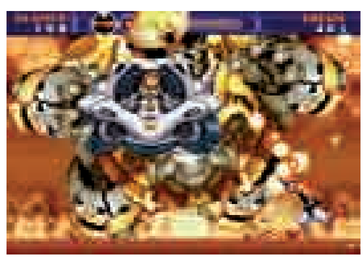
Excellent blaster from Treasure that successfully builds on the 13-year old Mega Drive game and brings it bang up to date for a new generation of gamers to enjoy. Blessed with fabulous animation, superb level design and plenty of knowing nods to past Sega titles, *Gunstar Future Heroes* is a gaming delight that constantly impresses thanks to its jaw-dropping visuals and frenetic, hyperactive gameplay.

Indeed, the only real problem with Treasure's game is that it's a little too easy, and once you've completed it there's little real incentive to ever go back to it. A real shame, because while it lasts it provides one of the greatest run 'n' gun experiences that GBA owners can buy.

OVERALL **82%**



» Mmm, sexy graphical effects



» Careful, this boss is bloody massive



THE REVENGE OF SHINOBI

INFORMATION

- **PUBLISHER:** THQ
- **DEVELOPER:** OVERWORKS
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £15

There have been some class *Shinobi* games released over the last 20 years – sadly this horrendously dire effort from Overworks isn't one of them. In fact, this is probably one of the worst *Shinobi* titles we've ever played and it nearly manages to rival *Cyber Shinobi* in the sheer crapness stakes. Christ, even the *Alex Kidd In Shinobi World* is more faithful than this crock of shit, and that wasn't even a proper *Shinobi* game!

Tepid gameplay, horrendously bad visuals and shocking music all combine to create a terrible title that shares little in common with the amazing original. Kudos to Overworks for making a new game instead of just porting a *Shinobi* from Sega's back catalogue, but did it really have to be this bad?

OVERALL **29%**



» Laugh at the poorly animated sprites, guffaw at the naff level design, then weep when you realise you've just paid money for it

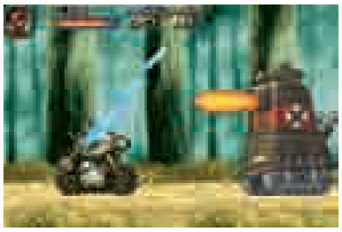


METAL SLUG ADVANCE

INFORMATION

- » **PUBLISHER:** IGNITION
- » **DEVELOPER:** SNK PLAYMORE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £15

With a variety of different *Metal Slug* clones already available for the GBA, it's great to see an official title come along that's better than all of them. Somehow SNK Playmore has been able to cram a *Slug* game into Nintendo's portable console, and while it might not be as stunning as the original Neo Geo titles, it's still very impressive to look at. Every single sprite is animated to perfection. From the lowliest soldier, to the largest metallic behemoth you have to face, the game looks utterly fantastic (even more so when viewed on a Micro). Then there's the excellent tunes, which capture the spirit of the game perfectly and are supported by meaty, boisterous spot effects. It may only sport a handful of levels but all are extremely well designed and thanks to the ability to collect a selection of different cards longevity is assured. A solid blaster that shouldn't be missed.



» Awwww, look how cute your little tank is. Don't underistimate it though, as it kicks serious ass

OVERALL 86%

ASTRO BOY: OMEGA FACTOR

INFORMATION

- » **PUBLISHER:** THQ
- » **DEVELOPER:** TREASURE/HITMAKER
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £15

Let's face it, when you have a main character that can shoot lasers from his fingers and has a machine gun concealed in his arse he's bound to leave an impression on you. Even if he didn't have these attributes *Astro Boy* would leave an impression because it's one of the most stunning GBA titles we've ever seen and boasts all sorts of graphical tricks and treats.

Sadly, the downside to all this is that slowdown at certain stages of the game can be crippling, and spoils what is otherwise an extremely solid blaster. Then there's the fact that *Astro Boy* is quite a tough title (like many of Treasure's games) and you'll need real skill and a fair amount of luck to get through some of the more frustrating levels. If you're after an insanely tough challenge, look no further.

OVERALL 71%



» He may look like butter wouldn't melt in his mouth but Astro Boy is one dangerous little robot



» Using the finger of death in one of the more hectic levels. If only the dreadful slowdown had been eliminated…

CT SPECIAL FORCES

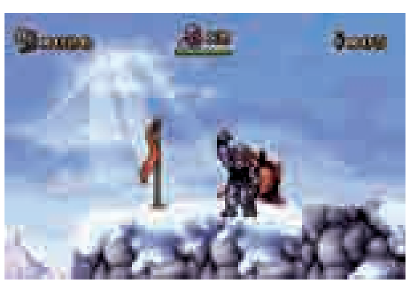
INFORMATION

- » **PUBLISHER:** HIP INTERACTIVE
- » **DEVELOPER:** LIGHT AND SHADOW PRODUCTIONS
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £10

There are three *Special Forces* titles available for the GBA, but the original is easily the best. This is the closest alternative to *Metal Slug Advance* that money can buy, and while it falls a little short of the excellent SNK title, it's still a very enjoyable romp.

Unlike *Metal Slug Advance*, *CT Special Forces* offers a selection of conventional run 'n' gun levels along with some overhead shooting sections and even an *Operation Wolf*-style sniper section. It's a neat mish-mash of ideas that gel far better than they ought to. Visually the game is also a treat, with brash, beautifully animated sprites and a selection of distinctive backdrops. Lovely!

OVERALL 75%



TUROK EVOLUTION

INFORMATION

- » **PUBLISHER:** ACCLAIM
- » **DEVELOPER:** RFX INTERACTIVE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £12

Deciding against a FPS, RFX Interactive turned *Turok Evolution* into a run 'n' gun, and while it's a damn sight better than the dull home console games it's still far from perfect. There's nothing wrong with the game's aesthetics, as the sprites are extremely well drawn, with the detailed backdrops punctuated by some solid spot effects.

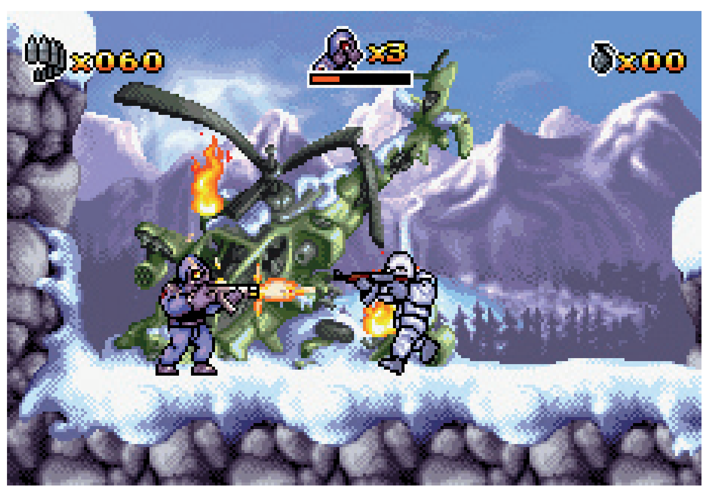
No, the problem here is that *Turok Evolution* is so sodding hard that it becomes more of an endurance test than an actual game. Enemies appear in completely pointless locations, certain monsters take a random amount of shoots before they finally keel over and die, while the level design is about as exciting as a trip to the dentists. One to avoid.



OVERALL 43%



» So this is how the dinosaurs became extinct



» So many bad guys to kill, so little time…

» SEGA'S CLASSIC RECEIVES A NIP AND TUCK

SEGA AGES: PANZER DRAGOON

SHORT, BUT OH SO SWEET



- » **SYSTEM:** PS2
- » **PRICE:** 3,392 YEN (ABOUT £16)
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **PLAYERS:** 1

» Hold the fire button down and you'll be able to lock onto enemies.





Damn this could have been so good. When Sega first announced that it would be bringing *Panzer Dragoon* to its Sega Ages range we went into blind fanboy mode and began fervantly praying to whatever gods were listening. Sadly, our requests for a complete trilogy has fallen on deaf ears, as Sega has only included the original *Panzer Dragoon* on its latest disc.

Once you get over the disappointment, you soon realise that this is a fine update, and whilst it lacks the huge amount of options that the recent *Treasure Box* boasted, it's still a step in the right direction.

What you're getting for your 16 notes is the original Saturn version and a new, updated arranged mode – essentially a cleaned up version of the original game. While the pop-up is still as bad as ever, the majority of textures are cleaned up, jaggies have been eliminated and it's now possible to see the detail in the game's many bosses. While some may see this slight upgrade as a bit of a cop-out, we're happy with the direction Sega has chosen. Of course, it would have been great to see *Panzer Dragoon* using the Xbox's Orta engine, but that's a moan we'll leave for another day…

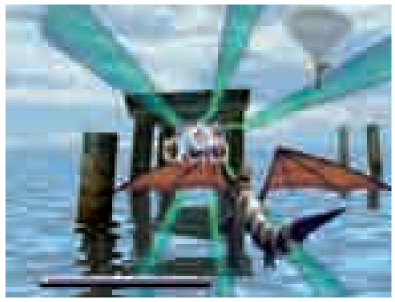
Gameplay in both modes is also identical and while the on-rail action may put some off, it really does allow you to appreciate *Panzer Dragoon*'s stunning world. Yes, it's short (the whole game can be completed in under an hour) but the winning combination of *Panzer Dragoon*'s unique environments and wanting to achieve a perfect hit rate will continually draw you back for more. Throw in a Pandora's Box, which lets you choose the level you start on, and the amount of health you begin with, as well as photos, videos and other extras and you have the definitive version of a classic game. And that's what Sega's series is all about.



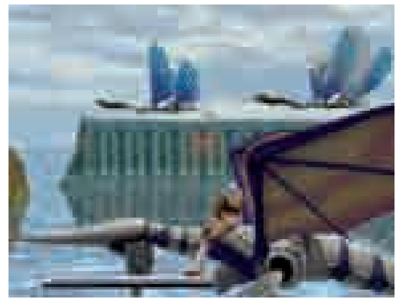
OPINION

I can't say I'm too impressed with this. I was never a huge fan of the original game and, to me, time hasn't been kind to *Panzer Dragoon*. Pop-up is really noticeable, the gameplay is incredibly simple and the differences between the two versions is very minimal. I'm sure fans are going to be pleased with this offering, but compared to the excellent *Treasure Box* this latest *Sega Ages* title feels a little lacking.

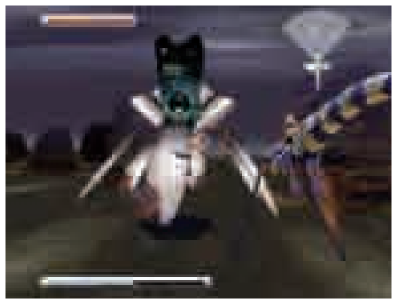
Damian Butt



» Forget the Saturn game, this is now the best version of *Panzer Dragoon* that money can buy



» Ahh, look at the lovely monsters. Arrggh, kill 'em



» Thanks to the graphical brush-up, many of the bosses in 'arranged mode' look a lot more impressive



» Perfecting a 100% shoot down rate is going to take some time

IN SUMMARY

It's not quite the title we were expecting but you can't argue with the result. A classic game lovingly restored with a healthy set of extras.



RATING	76%

OPINION

Yes it would have been nice if Sega had used the stunning Orta engine, but it has decided to do the next best thing. This is the equivalent of an artist going back to his masterpiece and simply adding a few little brushstrokes here and there to bring out the beauty in his creation. *Panzer Dragoon* has always been a great game, so why change it beyond all recognition? Let's just hope Sega remakes the remaining two titles.

Simon Phillips





eMag

RETRORATED

» IT'S A ME, BACK IN 2D

NEW SUPER MARIO BROS

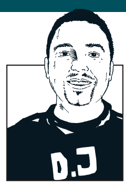
GOOD THINGS...





» Mario was finding it really hard to lay off the mushrooms…

- » **SYSTEM:** DS
- » **PRICE:** £29.99
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **PLAYERS:** 1-4

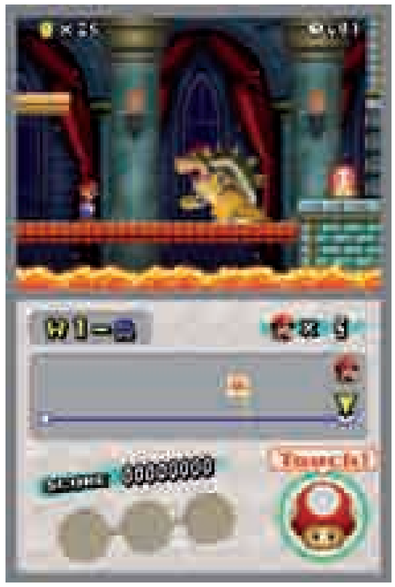


He's left the third dimension behind, his golf clubs and tennis rackets lie forgotten and covered in cobwebs at the back of the shed and Mario's favourite kart is parked safely in his garage. It's taken 14 years, but everyone's favourite plumber is finally back where he belongs: in a fantastic new 2D adventure, and boy does it feel good.

In true *Mario* style, the moustachioed chap has to rescue Princess Peach from the nefarious clutches of Bowser and Bowser Jr. The world map is back and looking better than ever, the 1-Up mushrooms are in, collecting 100 coins still earns you an extra life and each stage finishes with you leaping onto a flagpole.



» You won't run out of air but watch out for fishes



» It wouldn't be a *Mario* game if you couldn't bash Bowser

It's a guaranteed rush of nostalgia and will have you grinning like a crazed loon.

While Mario's latest adventure utilises a 2D viewpoint, the little fella himself is depicted in solid 3D. It's a wise decision on Nintendo's part as it not only gives Mario far more character and charm than his earlier adventures (send your backlash letters to the usual address) but also grants him many new moves that would have been a nightmare to pull off in 2D.

Of course, Mario hasn't spent all this time away from the world of 2D without learning a few new tricks and *Super Mario 64* skills such as wall-jumping are all present and correct, utilising an intuitive control system. Indeed, such is Mario's familiarity, you'll be executing moves and finding the correct pipe to exit down before you even begin to think about what you're doing. And in a way, that's *New Super Mario*'s one failing – it's simply too short, with skilled players being able to race through it in a few hours. Luckily, there's plenty to draw you back, whether it's finding the three hidden coins on each stage, or simply working out how to access the two worlds on the bottom of the map. Despite its length, *Mario* is the best 2D platformer available on the DS – if only there was a little more to it…



OPINION

After countless GBA rehashes we finally have a brand new *Mario* adventure, and it's fantastic. Level design is superb; there are plenty of nods to previous games via both visuals and musical ditties and you have a plethora of secrets to unlock. The bonus games are little more than filler and the touch screen is poorly implemented, but when the game's this much fun who cares? I certainly don't. Now where's the sequel?

Simon Phillips

IN SUMMARY

A great platformer that's only let down by its insanely short length. Let's just hope it doesn't take Nintendo another 14 years to come up with a sequel.

RATING 86%

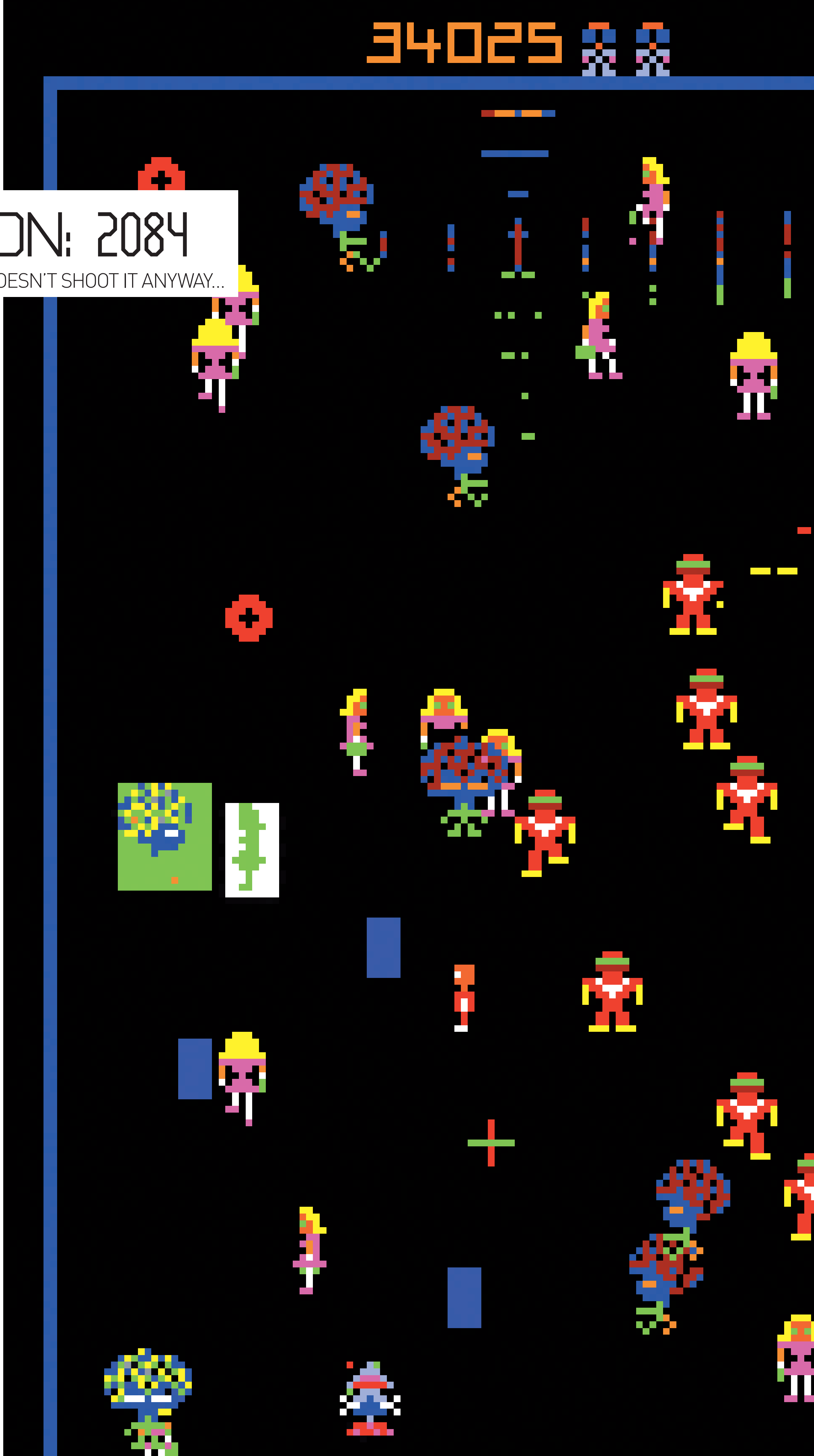


OPINION

It takes a little while to get used to Mario's new inertia (his jumps seem a lot heavier than before) and his new polygon look is bound to upset a few, but otherwise this is nearly perfect. Yes the length is an issue, but the two (hard to reach) extra worlds, a bounty of borrowed mini-games from *Super Mario 64 DS* and a brand new one that has the brother's racing against each other certainly makes up for it. Brilliant.

Damian Butt

eMag



ROBOTRON: 2084

IF IT MOVES SHOOT IT, IF IT DOESN'T SHOOT IT ANYWAY…



- » **PUBLISHER:** WILLIAMS
- » **RELEASED:** 1982
- » **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ARCADE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £1,000 FOR ORIGINAL MACHINE

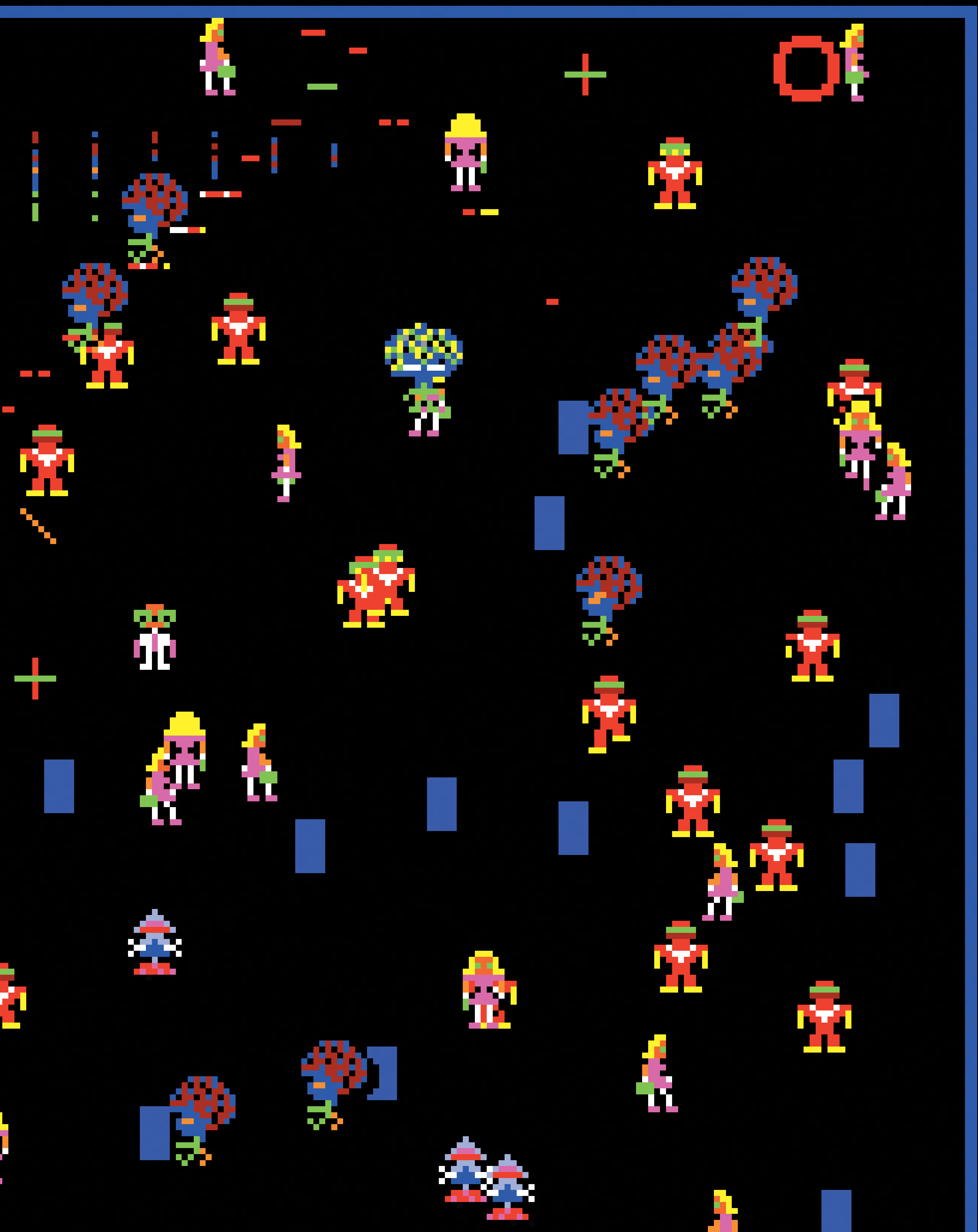
HISTORY



Play *Robotron: 2084* for just a few minutes and you'll immediately become entranced by its eye-catching visuals, excellent use of sound, and fast, responsive controls. Play *Robotron* for 30 minutes and your arms are starting to ache, the sweat is profusely pouring from your brow and the on-screen enemies are beginning to blend into a dizzying kaleidoscope of colours – but you're still playing and can't seem to release your grip on its dual joysticks. Play *Robotron* for 24 years (although not in one go) and it finally becomes obvious why it constantly appears in our Desert Island Disks section (nine times to date). It's quite possibly one of the most balanced games ever made, and even today it constantly appears on various compilations and services such as Xbox Live Arcade.

Eugene Jarvis once told me in an interview that the original concept for the game had you trying to steer the game's many enemies into the numerous electrodes that could be found on each level. Fortunately, Jarvis had a change of heart and decided that killing things with lasers would be a lot more fun. He wasn't wrong and *Robotron* went on to enthral gamers everywhere.

Taking part in single-screen arenas, each level is deceptively simple, as it requires you to do little more than blast everything on the screen, while rescuing stranded humans. You start to realise that you're going to need more than simple reflexes in order to achieve the highest score. Rescuing humans is the key to this, as constantly saving people without losing a life will cause your score to shoot up considerably. *Robotron*'s many different enemies show surprising levels of intelligence for the time and after a few stages you'll find yourself in a desperate fight against their overwhelming numbers, proving that Jarvis' creation is certainly not a game for the faint of heart. Don't be fooled by its simple looks and gaudy sound effects, *Robotron* IS quite simply one of the greatest games ever conceived and should be experienced by everyone.



BARGAIN HUNT

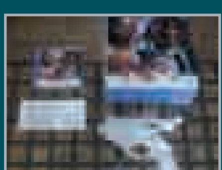
HUNT DOWN BARGAINS OR JUST DRINK UP THE LOVELINESS OF ALL THIS RETRO GOODNESS. FEAST YOUR EYES ON SIX PAGES OF THE VERY BEST THAT RETRO GAMING HAS TO OFFER…

Collecting retro games can be great fun, but you need to have a rough idea how much it's going to cost you. So here for your buying pleasure is Retro Gamer's buyer's guide. Where possible we have endeavoured to list the earliest international launch date, be it Asia, America or Europe. Prices were compiled from a variety of sources, including eBay, Japan auctions, car-boot sales, traders and general consensus. Foreign items will often be cheaper in their local country, so regional differences should be considered. Also, bear in mind that online items will often be cheaper than you will find in specialist stores. If you see an item selling for far less, good for you! We aim to help with finding those bargains, but if you see an item sold for much higher make sure you really want to purchase it. Prices fluctuate and the market sways, so there can never be a concrete listing. Bear in mind that something is worth as much as someone else is willing to pay. No one is perfect though, and we will openly admit that with over 100 different systems to list, mistakes can happen. If you spot a glaring error in our listings, please drop us an email at retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk and let us know about it!

RETRO AUCTION WATCH

Retro Gamer will be sifting through countless pages of eBay and reporting on any items of interest (hardware and software) that have caught our eye. If something has sold for a staggeringly high amount of money (or lower than it normally would) you'll find them listed here.

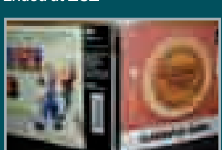
HOUSE OF THE DEAD 2 (GUN SET)
DREAMCAST
Normally sells for **£15+**
Ended at **£45**



COMMODORE 64
(*Terminator 2* pack)
Normally sells for **£15+**
Ended at **£37.00**



HARMFUL PARK
PlayStation
Normally sells for **£75+**
Ended at **£52**



3DO



3DO GOLDSTAR
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£45+ ($83 - $111)**



PANASONIC FZ-1 (FRONT LOADER)
» YEAR **1993**
»» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 - £60 ($74 - $111)**



PANASONIC FZ-10 (TOP LOADER)
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
While 3DO systems had much potential, there wasn't enough software support and it eventually stopped production. There were still some great games released!
- STAR CONTROL 2
- RETURN FIRE
- CRASH AND BURN

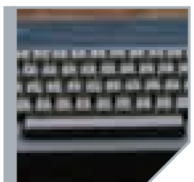
ACORN



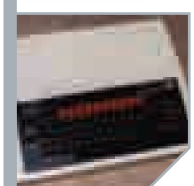
ARCHIMEDES
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) (with games)**
Early RISC-based home computer, quite powerful at the time.



ATOM
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92)**
Extremely old home computer by Acorn that's now hard to find.



ACORN ELECTRON
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Budget version of the BBC home computer (below).

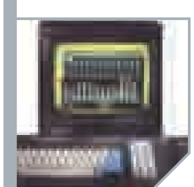


BBC MICRO
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
A classic British home computer, and quite popular. Affectionately known as 'the Beeb'.
- EXILE
- ELITE
- WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST

AMSTRAD



CPC 464
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+)**
Early classic 8-bit home computer from Amstrad, designed to compete against the C64 and ZX Spectrum. This early model has a built in cassette tape deck. Beware the models that come with a green screen monitor!



CPC 664
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Like the 464, except with a floppy disk drive. A short-lived model that was soon replaced by the superior 6128.



CPC 6128
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25+ ($46+)**
Improved model which doubled the RAM of previous iterations. Later 'Plus' models came with a cartridge port.
- RENEGADE
- RICK DANGEROUS
- GRYZOR



GX4000
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+)**
Console version of the CPC Plus range, came with joypads. Limited range of games.
- BURNIN' RUBBER
- PANG
- SWITCHBLADE

APPLE

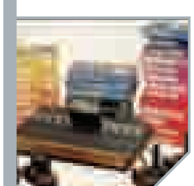


APPLE II
» YEAR **1977**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+) (with games)**
Like many early computers the Apple II was hand-built machine and sold to enthusiasts.
- KARATEKA
- ULTIMA IV
- LODE RUNNER

ATARI



400/800/600XL/XE
» YEAR **1979**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Series of old 8-bit Atari home computers.
- DROP ZONE
- THRUST
- ZYBEX



2600 (VCS)
» YEAR **1977**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+**
Earliest console by Atari. Various models, many with the classic wood panelling effect. Many UK gamers had their first taste of videogames on this.
- PITFALL
- ADVENTURE
- COSMIC ARK

RARITY GUIDE

ROCKING HORSE SHIT
HEN'S TEETH
LUCKY FIND
EBAY REGULAR
CAR BOOT SALE BARGAIN

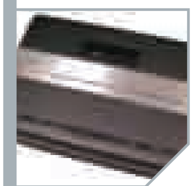


5200

» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**

Unpopular successor to the 2600, regarded as an Atari 400 without a keyboard.

- RESCUE ON FRACTALUS
- DIG DUG
- ZAXXON



7800

» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**

Handily, Atari made the 7800 backwards compatible with the ever popular 2600.

- KARATEKA
- CHOPLIFTER
- WINTER GAMES

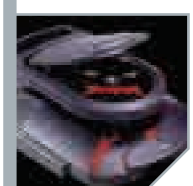


JAGUAR

» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**

Failed attempt to beat the PlayStation and Saturn in the console race. Few decent games. But it does have Jeff Minter's *Tempest*!

- TEMPEST 2000
- ALIEN VS PREDATOR
- BATTLESPHERE (RARE AND EXPENSIVE!)



JAGUAR CD

» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70 ($129)**

Rare and overpriced CD add-on for the Jaguar. Very few games, but it does look very much like a toilet seat!

- BATTLEMORPH CD
- HIGHLANDER CD
- TEMPEST 2000 MUSIC CD



LYNX I/II (2ND IS SMALLER)

» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**

Powerful handheld from Atari that failed due to poor marketing and battery life.

- BLUE LIGHTNING
- CALIFORNIA GAMES
- DIRTY LARRY RENEGADE COP



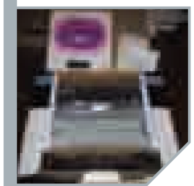
ST

» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+) depending on model**

Atari home computer and a big rival to the Amiga. There are many different models of various specifications.

- DUNGEON MASTER
- POPULOUS
- DAMOCLES

BANDAI



GUNDAM RX-78 COMPUTER

» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£75+ ($138+) (prices fluctuate wildly)**

Ultra rare, early Japanese games computer by Bandai. Aimed at both gamers and anime fans. Expect to pay a much higher price for a machine that's in mint condition.

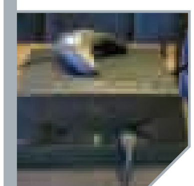


PLAYDIA

» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£90 ($166) and upwards according to eBay**

Bizarre Japan-only console, apparently made for kids.

- SAILOR MOON
- ULTRAMAN
- DRAGON BALL Z



PIPPIN(ATMARK)

» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £500+ ($921+)**

A strange hybrid system from Bandai and Apple. Very expensive and with very few games available. It's high price means that it's normally only sought after by collectors.

- RACING DAYS
- DRAGON BALL Z
- GUNDAM TACTICS



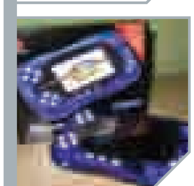
WONDERSWAN (B/W)

» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**



WONDERSWAN COLOR

» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**



WONDERSWAN CRYSTAL

» YEAR **2000**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**

Handheld system by Bandai, fairly popular. Can now be bought very cheaply, especially in Japan. Be sure to buy the SwanCrystal, which is basically an improved 'Color' model. Both colourised models can run B/W WS games.

- GUNPEY EX
- SWAN COLOSSEUM
- JUDGEMENT SILVERSWORD

COMMODORE



AMIGA500/600/1200

» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+) (more with games, depending on model)**

Classic and incredibly popular 16-bit home computer by Commodore, that was designed to compete against the Atari ST range. Vast array of different models, with differing specs, the Amiga 500 (with a RAM upgrade) is a particular favourite with many gamers.

- SPEEDBALL 2: BRUTAL DELUXE
- LEMMINGS
- SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER



C16/PLUS 4

» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15+ ($28+)**

The less well known sibling of the C64, but without the compatibility of its peers.

- TUTTI FRUTTI
- MONTY ON THE RUN
- KIKSTART



C64

» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+)**

One of the best selling 8-bit home computers of all time. Competed against the Spectrum and Amstrad home computers. Featured the wonderful SID sound chip that was put to amazing use by the likes of Ben Daglish and Rob Hubbard.

- WIZBALL
- MAYHEM IN MONSTERLAND
- PARADROID



C64 GS (GAMES SYSTEM)

» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**

Commodore's cartridge-based machine that tried to take on both Nintendo and Sega. Sadly failed due to a lack of support from most publishers.

- PANG
- NAVY SEALS
- BATTLE COMMAND



C128

» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**

Three machines (CPM, C64 and C128) in one box. Specialised software is relatively small in number.

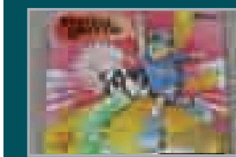


CDTV

» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**

Commodore aimed for the 'every home should have one' market and missed by a country

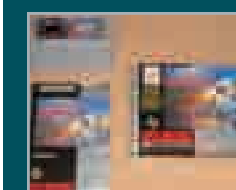
VIRTUAL BOWLING
VIRTUAL BOY
Normally sells for **£200+**
Ended at **£498**



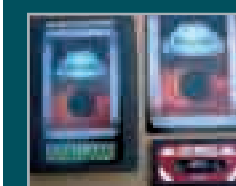
GOLDEN AXE: THE DUEL
Saturn
Normally sells for **£3+**
Ended at **£15.51**



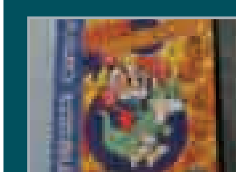
SUPER PROBOTECTOR
SNES
Normally sells for **£7+**
Ended at **£19.01**



ALIEN 8
Spectrum
Normally sells for **£8**
Ended at **£27.01**



MEGA BOMBERMAN
Mega Drive
Normally sells for **£9+**
Ended at **£24.51**



SIN & PUNISHMENT
N64
Normally sells for **£20+**
Ended at **£43.00**



mile. A curious mixture of games and educational material.



CD32
» YEAR **1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**
CD-based console that followed on from the experimental CDTV. Sometimes described as a consolised Amiga 1200 with CD drive. Despite featuring some extremely impressive games, the majority failed to improve on their 500 and 1200 counterparts.
- EXILE
- SIMON THE SORCERER
- ALIEN BREED 3D



VIC-20
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+) based on condition/extras**
The computer that established Commodore brand.
- HELLGATE
- SERPENTINE
- SUPER SMASH

FUJITSU



FUJITSU FM COMPUTERS
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100+ ($184+)**
Early Nineties home computers by Fujitsu.



FUJITSU FM TOWNS MARTY
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£200+ ($368+)**
A legendary console, which contains both a CD and disk drive. Based on Fujitsu's old FM Towns computers, and mostly backwards compatible with the majority of games. Very expensive, (especially if you find a machine in mint condition), but with a lot of chic!
- ZAK MC KRAKEN
- TATSUJIN OU
- SCAVENGER 4

MISCELLANEOUS



BALLY ASTROCADE
» YEAR **1978**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
Early videogame system that used interchangeable cartridges, developed by the Bally games division at Midway Games.
- GATE ESCAPE
- ICBM ATTACK
- TREASURE COVE



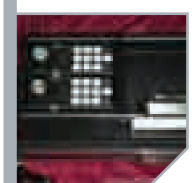
BARCODE BATTLER
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£5 ($18)**
Handheld LCD game, where you must swipe barcoded cards (or barcodes taken from soup packets!) to gather stats, and then battle against someone else who swiped barcodes. We're not making this up…
–Cocal Cola with Lime 500ml
– gamesTM issue 39
– Orange Tic Tacs



CASIO LOOPY
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**
More inanity from the land of the rising sun. This is a console designed especially for female gamers and it even allows stickers to be printed out… Casio hoped it would do better than their failed PV-1000 console released in 1983.



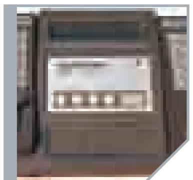
FAIRCHILD CHANNEL F
» YEAR **1976**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) (from the USA)**
The first commercially released console that used programmable cartridges. A real piece of history. Despite this, it's surprisingly cheap to purchase (although importing from the US may cost a fair amount).



COLECOVISION
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) standalone**
Coleco's third generation videogame system. Quite a few decent games, and considering its age it's a fairly powerful machine. Many of its arcade conversions were considered superior to the other systems on the market.
-CONGO BONGO
- SMURPH RESCUE
- CABBAGE PATCH KIDS



DRAGON 32/64
» YEAR **1982/3**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£8 ($15) (very cheap on eBay)**
Early British home computer that tried to cash in on the early Eighties boom. Short-lived though quite popular. The 64 model was released roughly a year after the 32.
- GRID RUNNER
- DEVIL ASSAULT
- CAVE FIGHTER



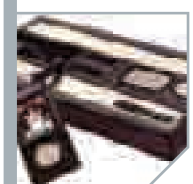
ARCADIA 2001
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Failed console by Emerson, which had numerous different clones released as well.
- FUNKY FISH
- JUNGLER
- ROBOT KILLER



EPOCH CASSETTE VISION
» YEAR **1981**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
Obscure early Japanese console, which in 1983 had a budget 'Junior' model released.



EPOCH SUPER CASSETTE VISION
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**
Epoch's successor to the Cassette Vision, which was also marketed in Europe under the Yeno label. Apparently it only had around 30 games released for it.



INTELLIVISION
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40+ ($74+) depending on extras**
Developed by Mattel, the system was revolutionary. It was the first console to be technically 16-bit, go online (to download games), and it featured voice synthesis. Today it still has a strong retro following.
- FROG BOG
- ARMOR BATTLE
- LOCK 'N' CHASE



ODYSSEY
» YEAR **1972**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
The original home videogame console, even before Atari got in on the act! Created by Ralph Baer, this is the ultimate piece of gaming history. Fortunately, it can be purchased relatively cheaply.



PLAYSTATION
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) depending on condition/model**
Another attempt by Sony to enter the videogame hardware market (after the MSX), this time they took over the market. There are countless undocumented yet excellent PS games. Was later re-released as the PSOne, which is more expensive, but looks much nicer in design.
- CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT
- FINAL FANTASY VII
- RIDGE RACER



SAM COUPE
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 - £200 ($92 - $368) (allegedly for a mint system)**
Originally developed by Miles Gordon Technology in Swansea, the Sam Coupe was a unique 8-bit British home computer which didn't fare very well. It could even emulate the 48K Speccy to a degree.
- DEFENDERS OF THE EARTH
- ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE ROBOT MONSTERS
- PRINCE OF PERSIA



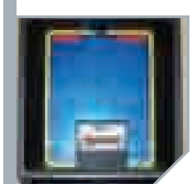
SUPERVISION
» YEAR **1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
Marketed by several different companies, this was essentially a cut-price competitor to the monochrome Game Boy. Unsurprisingly, it was not manufactured for very long and is now hard to find.
- ALIEN
- HONEY BEE
- POLICE BUST



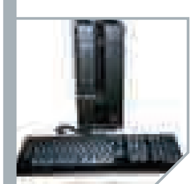
TIGER ELEC. GAME.COM
» YEAR **1997**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
Attempt by Tiger Electronics to compete against the Game Boy.
- RESIDENT EVIL 2
- SONIC JAM
- DUKE NUKEM 3D



TOMY TUTOR (MK1/JR/MK2)
» YEAR **1983/4**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Series of old computers by Tomy.



VECTREX (MB/GCE)
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147)**
The only home system ever to come with a vector display, enabling true vector graphics.
- SPACE WAR
- SPINBALL
- HYPERCHASE



X68000
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£90+ ($166+)**
Home computer by Sharp, released only in Japan. Famous for its arcade ports.
- CASTLEVANIA CHRONICLES
- STREET FIGHTER 2
- FINAL FIGHT

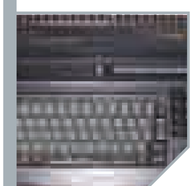
MSX



MSX 1
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+)**
An early attempt to create a standard gaming platform, fairly common in the UK.
- PENGUIN ADVENTURE
- KNIGHTMARE
- THE GOONIES



MSX 2
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Updated and more powerful version of the MSX, very popular in Holland and Brazil where even today some excellent homebrew games are developed.
- METAL GEAR 2
- ALESTE 2
- VAMPIRE KILLER

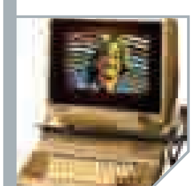


MSX 2+
» YEAR **1988**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
Another hardware update that proved to be very popular in Holland.
- SPACE MANBOW
- GOLVELLIUS 2
- F1 SPIRIT 3D SPECIAL



MSX TURBO R
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
A final and not very popular hardware update, that was virtually exclusive to Japan.
- FRAY
- PRINCESS MAKER
- ILLUSION CITY

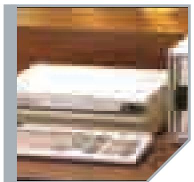
NEC



PC-6### (ALSO MK II)
» YEAR **1984 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+) depending on model**
Quite old 6000 series of home computers by NEC, with a lot of very cool Japanese games for it. Released in the USA as the NEC Trek. While fairly cheap, be careful of shipping prices.



PC-8801
» YEAR **1981 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37) (cheap on Yahoo! Japan)**
Old computer series by NEC, with several different models over the years. Has a massive roster of cool games, including the original *Silpheed*. While very cheap to buy online from Japan, shipping is expensive.



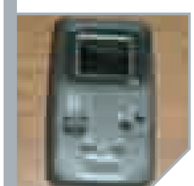
PC-9801
» YEAR **1983 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65) (cheap on Yahoo! Japan)**
Another home computer series by NEC, again with many great games. Laptop versions also exist. Most games by Falcom are worth watching out for.



PCFX
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92) prices can fluctuate**
32-bit tower console by NEC, resembles a PC. Released in Japan only, had software support until 1998. Only a few action titles. Apparently, it also had quite a bit of hentai on it.
- LAST IMPERIAL PRINCE
- CHOUJIN HEIKI ZEROIGAR (SHMUP)
- ZENKI FX (FIGHTER)



PC-ENGINE
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£55 ($101)**
Classic piece of Japanese hardware from NEC which features many excellent arcade ports and a few exclusives. The CoreGrafx system is basically a PC-Engine with AV output.



PC-ENGINE GT
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70+ ($129+)**
Portable handheld version of the Japanese PC-Engine that played all Japanese Hu-Cards.



TURBO GRAFX-16
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**
American version of the PC-Engine. It has territory lockout, so the two system's Hu-Cards are not mutually compatible.



TURBO EXPRESS
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92) (massive fluctuations)**
Portable handheld version of the American Turbo Grafx-16.
- BONK/PC KID SERIES
- BLOODY WOLF
- NINJA SPIRIT



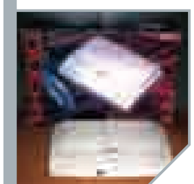
SUPER GRAFX
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147) (prices can fluctuate)**
Meant to be the successor to the original PC-Engine, but sadly failed due to lack of games. It is backwards compatible, but only had 6 games specifically released for it.
- ALDYNES
- DARIUS PLUS
- GHOULS AND GHOSTS



PCE CD-ROM/ TURBO GRAFX CD
» YEAR **1988**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+)**
CD-ROM add-on for the PCE and TG16, released in 1988 and 1989. It has no region lockout.



PCE DUO/TURBO DUO
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£120 ($221)**
System that combines the PCE/TG16 with its CD add-on. Released in both Japan and America in 1991 and 1992. The CD games still have no region lockout.

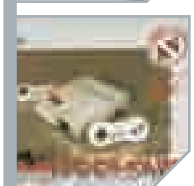


DUO-R
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147)**
Stripped down white version of the PCE Duo, without headphone port. Later in 1994 a Duo-RX version was released, slightly blue in colour and came with a 6 button control pad.
- DRACULA X
- SHUBIBINMAN 3
- LORDS OF THUNDER

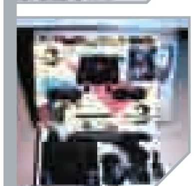
NINTENDO



FAMICOM
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£60 ($111)**
Nintendo's first foray into the home console market, with over a 1000 games to choose from!



FAMICOM AV
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 ($74)**
A cheaper remodelled version of the Famicom, now with AV output.



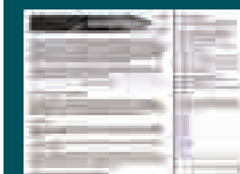
FAMICLONE
» YEAR **N/A**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Mass-produced pirate versions of the Famicom system. Virtually infinite different designs.
- CRISIS FORCE
- SWEET HOME
- HAUNG DI



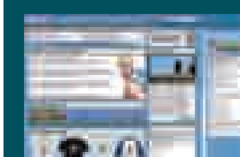
FAMICOM DISK SYSTEM
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70 ($129)**
Nintendo's attempt to bring cheap rewritable disk-based gaming to the masses. Be warned, the drive belts break very easily.

RETRO GAMING SITES

RLLMUK
Yes it's a forum but the retro section is filled with some knowledgeable individuals, many directly associated with the industry. If you've got a question, chances are the likes of 213, Roberthazleby or Jpickford will be able to help. **http://www.rllmukforum.com/**



LEMON64
Time to give Kim Lemon's C64 website another mention. This is a Commodore 64 fanatic's dream and is filled with masses of information, a very friendly forum, plenty of classic reviews and much more besides. **www.lemon64.com**

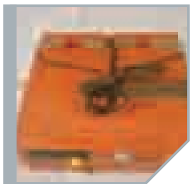


WORLD OF MONKEY ISLAND
The *Monkey Island* series is one of LucasArt's most beloved franchises, so it's hardly surprising to find a huge website dedicated to the adventures of Guybrush Threepwood at: **http://www.worldofmi.com/**



WORLD OF SPECTRUM
Site that covers everything you need to know about Sir Clive's 8-bit computer. Magazine scans, playable games, an active forum, World of Spectrum has it all. One of the most dedicated websites around. **www.worldofspectrum.org**





SHARP FAMICOM TWIN
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 ($184)**
Combined Famicom and Disk System, by Sharp.
- OTOCKY
- NAZO NO MURASAMEJOU
- PATLABOR



GAME&WATCH
» YEAR **1980-1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£1+ ($2+)**
Series of handheld LCD games that were created by the legendary Gunpei Yoko.



GAME BOY B/W
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£5 ($9)**
Nintendo's original handheld portable, with interchangeable cartridges. Despite it's age, and monochrome display, there are many excellent classic GB games.



GAME BOY POCKET
» YEAR **1996**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£8 ($15)**
A smaller and more compact GB, with improved screen. A Japanese version with built-in light was released and sells for a much higher price.
- SUPER MARIO LAND
- TETRIS
- POKÉMON



GAME BOY COLOR
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£12 ($22)**
Colour-based version of the classic GB. Backwards compatible, but it also has several exclusive games that were rather special.
- METAL GEAR SOLID: GHOST BABEL
- RESIDENT EVIL GAIDEN
- HARVEST MOON 3



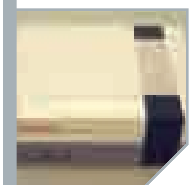
GAME BOY ADVANCE
» YEAR **2001**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**



N64
» YEAR **1996**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Nintendo's last cartridge based console, competitor to the PlayStation and Saturn. Has several highly sought after classics. Some games (like *Donkey Kong*) require the RAM expansion pack and wouldn't run without it.
- SIN & PUNISHMENT
- PILOTWINGS 64
- BLAST CORPS



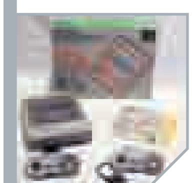
N64 DD
» YEAR **1999**
» » RARITY
» PRICE **£150+ ($276+)**
Another attempt by Nintendo to incorporate disc media with one of their cartridge-based consoles. Expensive and very few games were released.
- F-ZERO EXPANSION KIT
- MARIO ARTIST SERIES
- DOSHIN THE GIANT



NES (TOASTER)
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
The Western version of the Famicom, popular the world over. Plenty of great Nintendo classics to choose from, and very cheap too.



NES (DOG BONE)
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92)**
Remodelled and improved version of the traditional NES. Region lockout was also removed, meaning all 72 pin based NES games work.
- VICE: PROJECT DOOM
- SNAKE'S REVENGE
- SUPER MARIO BROS. 3



SNES (SUPER FAMICOM IN JAPAN)
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
Nintendo's successor to the NES, and one of their most popular machines. A retro staple with a fantastic selection of games.



SNES 2 (KNOWN AS 'JR' IN JPN)
» YEAR **1997**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+)**
Cheaper and redesigned SNES.
- SUPER METROID
- SECRET OF MANA
- SUPER MARIO WORLD



VIRTUAL BOY
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147)**
Nintendo's failed attempt at a pseudo Virtual Reality games system. Quite a novelty as there is nothing else like it. Be warned though, as many gamers have complained that the machine gives them headaches – never a good thing.
- INSMOUSE NO YAKATA (HP LOVECRAFT INSPIRED FPS)
- WARIO LAND
- RED ALARM

PHILIPS



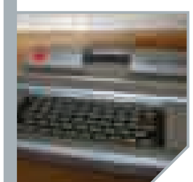
CD-I 205/210/220
» YEAR **from1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Unique system by Philips.The 200 series consists of front loading systems, with each one having slightly different specifications.



CD-I 450/490/740
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) (more with DVC)**
Consolised version of previous models, requires a different '9956' DVC.
- THE APPRENTICE
- BURN CYCLE
- HOTEL MARIO



VIDEOPAC G7000
» YEAR **1978**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Popular across the world (especially Brazil and Holland) and known also as the 'Odyssey 2'.



VIDEOPAC G7400
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
A successor to the G7000, that was backwards compatible.
- QUEST FOR RINGS
- PICKAXE PETE
- MUNCHKIN

SEGA



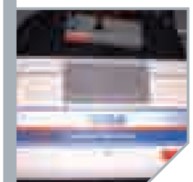
32X
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65) (with leads)**
Failed Mega Drive add-on, designed to enhance it's capabilities.
- KNUCKLES CHAOTIX
- KOLIBRI
- DARXIDE



DREAMCAST
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46) depending on extras**
Sega's final hardware release. No gamer should be without it. Amazing official roster of games, plus it can emulate older systems.
- IKARUGA
- CRAZY TAXI
- REZ



GAME GEAR
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28) more with extras**
Handheld by Sega, designed to compete against the Game Boy. Low battery life, but effectively a portable Master System. Could also be used as a TV (as shown here).
- SHINOBI 2
- COLUMNS
- TV TUNER



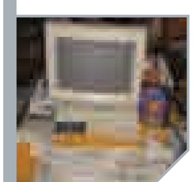
SG-1000 (PLUS THE MARK II AND III)
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20-£50 ($37 - $$92)**
Sega's first console, and a piece of history! The Mark III model would later be redesigned to become the Master System. Like the Japanese Famicom, it's much nicer than the UK version.



SC-3000
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £50 ($92)**
Computer equivalent of the SG-1000, also by Sega. Was popular in Australia and other ex-colonies. Mutually compatible with the SG-1000 as well.



MASTER SYSTEM I/II
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) with leads etc.**
Popular Sega 8-bit console, which competed against the NES. Adapted from previous systems.
- PHANTASY STAR
- WONDER BOY 3: DRAGON'S TRAP
- NINJA GAIDEN



AMSTRAD MEGA PC
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) (according to eBay)**
A strange hybrid between an Amstrad PC and a Mega Drive. A nice collectable oddity, though according to past eBay auctions, not a high seller.

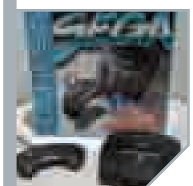


TERADRIVE
» YEAR **1991**
» » RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £100 ($184)**
Another Mega Drive computer

hybrid. Released earlier than the Amstrad hybrid, these systems have no connection. Due to being exclusive to Japan, they are seldom seen in the wild. Likely to be very expensive if you are able to find one.



MEGA DRIVE/ GENESIS I/II
» YEAR **1989+**
» RARITY
» » PRICE **£10 ($18) depending on model**
The big daddy, Sega's most successful console and a retro classic.

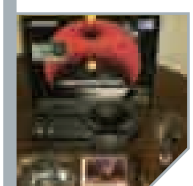


GENESIS 3
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**
Developed by Majesco. This third, cut-down model is rarer and has some compatibility issues. USA only.



NOMAD
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 ($184)**
Handheld Mega Drive. Pricey, low battery life and some compatibility problems.

- RANGER-X
- THUNDER FORCE IV
- COMIX ZONE



MULTIMEGA/ WONDERMEGA/
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100+ ($184+) depending on system**
CDX/Xeye
A series of different hybrid MD and MCD systems, released in the three main territories.



MEGA CD (SCD) I/II
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+) depending on system**
Sega's CD add-on for the Mega Drive. Despite heavy criticism, has many excellent games.

- POPFUL MAIL
- SNATCHER
- SONIC CD



PICO
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37) (more with games)**
Toy computer released for young children. The games come in nice storybook style boxes.

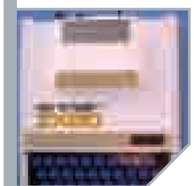
- SONIC'S GAMEWORLD
- ECCO JR. AND THE GREAT OCEAN HUNT
- THE LION KING: ADVENTURES AT PRIDE ROCK



SATURN
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**
Sega's competition against the PlayStation and N64. A real 2D powerhouse, that despite an amazing catalogue of games never really took off.

- SATURN BOMBERMAN
- GUARDIAN HEROES
- DRAGON FORCE

SINCLAIR

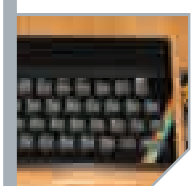


ZX-80
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£200 ($368) Apparently if boxed and mint**
Very early British home computer from Sinclair. Low capability meant limited gaming possibilities. Now extremely hard to get hold of.



ZX-81
» YEAR **1981**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £70 ($129) if mint**
Improved home computer from Sinclair, with black and white ASCII graphics. Not as hard to source as a ZX-80, but still commands a respectable price.

- 3D MONSTER MAZE
- MAZOGS
-SABOTAGE



ZX SPECTRUM 48K
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**



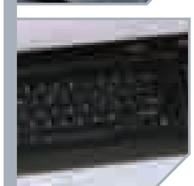
ZX SPECTRUM 128K
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 ($74)**



ZX SPECTRUM
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**



ZX SPECTRUM +2
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**



ZX SPECTRUM +3
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 ($74)**
The British classic loved by many. A vast improvement over previous Sinclair computers, it was normally compared against the C64 and Amstrad home computers, which in turn caused many playground arguments over who had the better machine.

- HEAD OVER HEELS
- 3D DEATHCHASE
- SKOOL DAZE

SNK

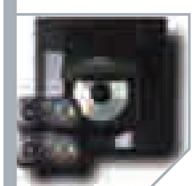


NEOGEO AES
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£150+ ($276+)**
High powered home system by SNK. Features many high quality arcade games. Sadly, many titles are now ridiculously expensive to purchase.



NEOGEO MVS
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £70 ($129) (multi-slot systems cost more)**
High powered arcade system by SNK, which many people prefer over the home based AES due to lower pricing of games. (The majority of NeoGeo titles appeared on both systems, or alternatively can be converted).

- METAL SLUG
- KING OF FIGHTERS ##
- WAKU WAKU 7

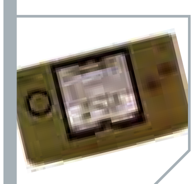


NEOGEO CD
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 ($184) varies**



NEOGEO CDZ
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80+ ($147+)**
CD-based NeoGeo systems, an attempt by SNK to lower the cost of NeoGeo games. The CDZ is cheaper and has slightly improved loading times. Most CD titles are ports from the AES/MVS.

- VIEWPOINT
- AGGRESSORS OF DARK COMBAT
- SAMURAI SHOWDOWN RPG



NEOGEO POCKET (B/W)
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**

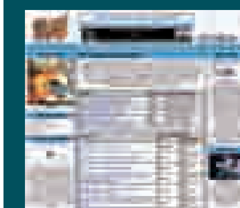


NEOGEO POCKET COLOR
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**
Handheld NeoGeo systems by SNK, that sadly failed to compete with the Game Boy, despite featuring some great games. Still a wonderful little system though. Be sure to buy the later colour screen model.

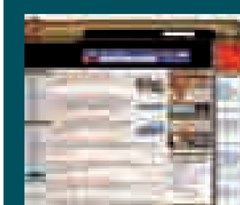
- FASELEI!
- CARD FIGHTERS (CAPCOM/SNK)
- MATCH OF THE MILLENNIUM (CAP VS SNK)

RETRO GAMING SITES

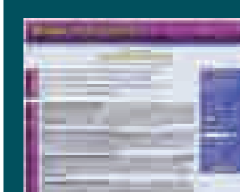
THE BLACK MOON PROJECT
Excellent website that's fully dedicated to Philips' CDi console. There are plenty of great reviews, informative interviews and some interesting articles on one of gaming's most misunderstood machines. Essential reading.
http://www.classicgaming.com/blackmoon/articles.asp



RPGAMER
If you love the Role Playing Game genre then look no further, as RPGamer will be like visiting Nirvana. There are hundreds of different games, comprehensive walkthroughs a very helpful forum and excellent, up-to-date news. RPG fans will love it.
http://www.rpgamer.com/index.html



THE DRAGON'S LAIR PROJECT
While the majority of this site is obviously dedicated to *Dragon's Lair* franchise many other Laser Disk games are also featured here. In fact, this is easily one of the most comprehensive sites about the subject around and is well worth visiting.
http://www.dragons-lair-project.com/



Special thanks to **lofi-gaming.org.uk** who supplied several of our screenshots

RETRO SCENE

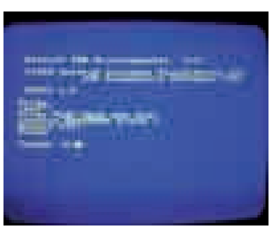
LAST YEAR'S RETRO BALL EVENT WAS A HUGE SUCCESS SO WHY CHANGE ITS NAME TO RETRO FUSION? ORGANISER CHRIS WILKINS HOLDS ALL THE ANSWERS...



» Organiser Chris Wilkins (left) with ex Zzap!64 writer Simon N Goodwin

THE RETRO BALL'S BACK WITH A BRAND NEW NAME

NO BALLS BUT PLENTY OF FUSION



» Not everyone had a good time…

Cast your mind back to issue 20 and you may remember we had a rather fab time at the Retro Ball. Set up by retro enthusiast Chris Wilkins, the event proved extremely popular and garnered a massive amount of praise from the scene. Filled with several hi-key celebrities such as Archer Maclean, the Oliver Twins and Rob Hubbard, hundreds of different games (and a very handy bar) the event proved to be a huge success with everyone who attended.

Wilkins is now returning with a brand new name, even more games and celebrities and the promise that this year's Retro Fusion: A weekend of gaming will be better than ever. Eager to find out more we asked Wilkins what we could expect to see when Retro Fusion opens its doors later this year.

Retro Gamer: So why change the name of the event?

Chris Wilkins: We heard that the name of last year's event, The Retro Ball, caused some confusion with a number of those that were thinking of coming. The perception of many was that the show was an excuse for attendees to dress up in Eighties party wear and glide gracefully across large open dance floors with a partner in tow. This unsurprisingly put a lot of people looking for a gaming event off making the trip all the way to Kenilworth.

So this year we have called the event "Retro Fusion: A Weekend Of Gaming!"

This title and the accompanying advert sum up the weekend – gaming, gaming and more gaming!

RG: Last year's event was a huge success, what will you be doing to ensure that the same thing happens this year?

CW: We have secured sponsorship with XPLOSIV, makers of the fantastic *Taito Legends* and *Taito Legends 2* compilations. XPLOSIV will be coming along to the event and showcasing its forthcoming PSP *Taito Legends* game and running a High Score competition over the weekend on one of the games in the compilation. The resulting winner will walk away with a brand new PSP and a copy of the *Taito Legends* game.

The JAMMA+ (www.jammaplus.com) boys and girls will also be returning and this time they will be bringing even more arcade cabinets for visitors to play on. We will have Pinball tables, pachinko tables and as many consoles and computers from the late Seventies through to modern tech that we can fit into the venue.

A Q&A with the attending celebrities will also take place and competitions will be held throughout the weekend. The overall objective of the events we host is to re-create the atmosphere of a seaside arcade that you could frequent in the Eighties and early Nineties. At last year's event we largely achieved that. This year we intend to follow a similar goal plan but make improvements to each area taking on board the feedback we have received and the lessons that were learnt from The Retro Ball.

RG: So what celebrities do you have lined up for us?

CW: We plan to bring along some familiar faces seen at last year's event such as Jon Hare, Archer Maclean and The Oliver Brothers. New faces will include the likes of Oli and Franco Frey, Roger Kean and Matthew Uffindell. We'll be continually adding more celebrities so be sure to keep checking our website.

RG: Where will the event be held and will it be easy to reach?

CW: The event will be held in The Wardens Cricket club in Kenilworth, Warwickshire. Last year's event was held at this venue and proved successful so we thought – why not use the same location again?

Kenilworth is pretty much in the middle of the UK with Coventry on its doorstep and Birmingham around 20 miles away.



» The beat-'em-zone proved very popular with the punters



» *Galaxian* world champ Gary Whelan (left) poses with *Space Harrier* record holder Nick Hutt

Birmingham International airport is even closer and rail routes into the area are extremely good, so there should be little problem getting to the event.

RG: Will this year's event be for charity again, and if not why?
CW: There will be a charity element to the event this year, in that an auction will he held over the weekend where proceeds will be going to the Everyman charity. Attendees are encouraged to bring along some retro goodies that we can auction for this important charity.

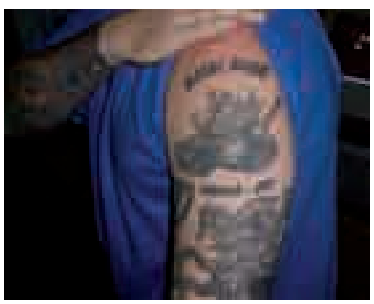
Last year the proceeds of the ticket sales were given to Everyman; this year that money will be used to help the likes of Jamma+ in transporting their cabinets to the venue.

RG: Why do you think the original Retro Ball received so much support?
CW: The fact that the money made over the weekend was going to a good cause certainly helped in bringing the celebrities, exhibitors and paying public to the event. This also attracted attention from the local news and newspapers that certainly helped. This year the charity element remains and we hope to hand over a nice sum of money to the Everyman charity soon after the event.

RG: Has this year's event been easier to organise than last year's?
CW: With the contacts and friends made at last year's show, preparing for the Retro Fusion: A Weekend of Gaming! event has been somewhat easier, but still very challenging. With the new arrival in my family, the day job and other projects I am working on, ensuring I make time for organising the event is the biggest challenge.

RG: Will you use a similar layout to last year (shoot-'em-ups, driving, beat-'em-ups etc?)?
CW: The layout of the event is still under discussion – last year splitting the venue into zones was largely successful. We may just follow the same formula this year. Maybe readers of Retro Gamer can let us know what they would like to see at this year's event on the Retro Gamer forum.

RG: How useful was the feedback from last year's event?
CW: The feedback we received was invaluable. We will endeavour to address the small number of issues raised and in doing so make sure that the Retro Fusion: A Weekend Of Gaming! event is bigger, better and more polished than The Retro Ball was.
RG: With the arrival of your son, how does your wife feel about your unflagging duty to the world of retro gaming?
CW: My wife is extremely supportive and will be attending this year's event with our two daughters and newly born son in tow.



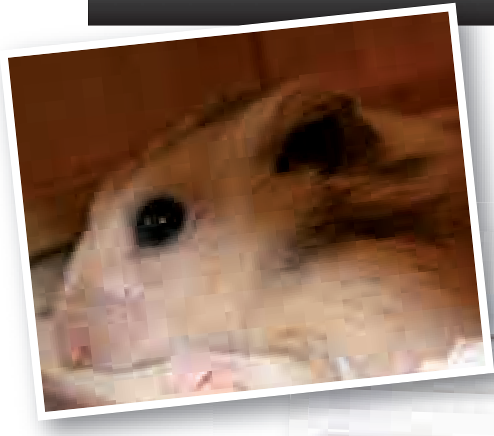
» Here's the arm of a true gaming fan. We've never seen a Metal Slug tattoo like this before and we doubt we ever will again



» Last year's panel gave a great insight into how gaming has changed over the years

DEVELOPER DIARY

AFTER COMPLETING THE REMAKE OF TOTAL ECLIPSE, WE DECIDED TO GO BACK TO DRILLER, THE GAME THAT KICK-STARTED THE FREESCAPE SERIES IN 1987. THE ONLY WAY TO TRULY REMAKE A GAME FROM THE EIGHTIES IS TO GO BACK AND LIVE IT, SO WITH A MIX OF ILLUSTRIOUS ARTISTS FROM 'NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL MUSIC 9' WAILING AWAY IN THE BACKGROUND, WE PAUSE TO WONDER WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO PEPSI & SHIRLEY...



» He looks cute but this little bugger caused me no end of grief

THESE ARE THE DIARIES OF ANDY & STU – THE OVINE BOYS

UPDATE TIME...

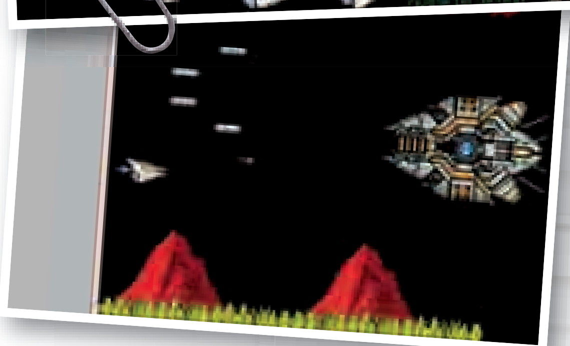
So Stu says, "You know the Retro Remakes competition starts soon... I've been playing *Nemesis*, how about we have a go at that? "Sorry readers, the temptation to give one of my favourite games the remake treatment is something I can't say no to... *Driller* will have to wait a little longer, well maybe just for a month!

Midnight

Now the rules for the competition have been published, it's looking like there's no reason *Nemesis* can't be a candidate, so we're officially on board. The best thing about events such as this is that they can really help motivate you, and the buzz in the forums is egging everyone on. The ideas are flowing already and it's going to be a late night tonight (this morning). An hour or so on and I've got most of the Warp Rattler (aka the Vic-Viper) redrawn, using the original as a base. Still some frames to do, but loving it already. Meanwhile Stu has converted our multi-purpose level editor ready for *Nemesis* and has already dabbled in Max to get the viper moving around on screen.

» A comparison between the original ship and our new version



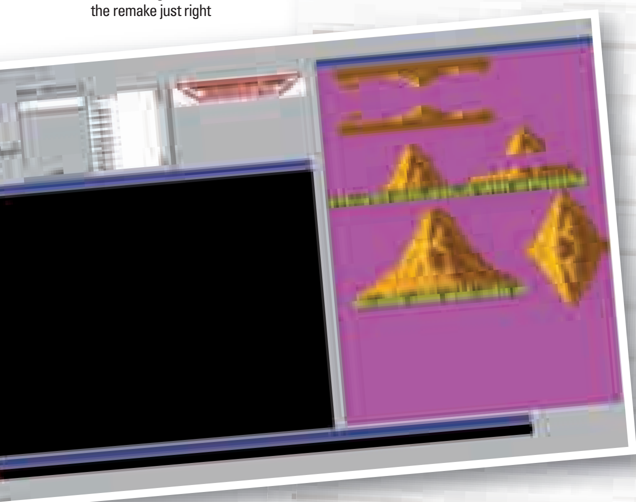


» Playing Nemesis to ensure we get the feel of the remake just right

Thu 1st June

The Vic-Viper sprite is complete now so the next job is to extract some of the graphics from the original. Our interpretation of the game is going to have a complete facelift of the visuals, for starters the graphics are going to be double the size, but we feel it is important to make sure it feels the same. This is where it is essential to have the originals graphics to use as a baseline. We also need to make sure the levels are constructed accurately, so time to get a video grab of each level and run it through AVI-Edit so we can extract the interesting parts.

Decided to get an early-er night tonight, so we packed up at 12:30... I didn't get to bed for another two hours though. Was I on a roll, redrawing all the scenery for level 1? Had I reconstructed this in the level editor? No. The bloody hamster had escaped! After two hours of trying to track the little %&£# down I decided to give up. Laid some food traps in all the rooms I thought he might be in and gave up, hoping he didn't turn up in the morning as Hamster Jam. Get into the bedroom and there he is, sitting at the bottom of the bed with an innocent look only a hamster can have.



» Building the first level of Nemesis step-by-step

Fri 2nd June

After the hamster excitement of the night before I'm amazed I still have loads of energy to put in a couple of hours tonight. The game engine is coming along nicely. Lasers have been done next which look like they'd cut through anything!

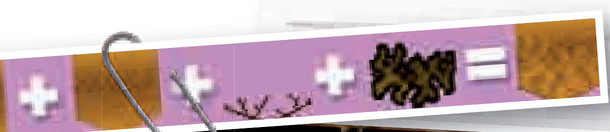
Sat 3rd June

Do not usually play with the PC on a Saturday, but still fired up and this morning have put together a level strip from the video grab. This will ensure we get all our versions of the tilemap graphics in the right places. Later in the day, got back on for another hour and experimented with the background graphics. Tried a few styles and settled on one made up of a number of layers.

Mon 5th June

Started work on the large mountains. Making good use of my cheep-o Trust pen tablet recently acquired from a well-known supermarket. First I drew the outline of the mountains to roughly match the shapes of the originals and filled them in with a medium brown colour. They look pretty awful and at first it seems to get worse as I start to apply a mixture of darker and lighter colours, but by the end of the first one it all came together fairly effortlessly.

The game now has some rudimentary Bacterions walking and flying about.

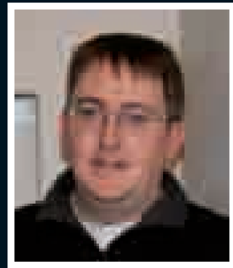






NAME: STUART COLLIER
JOB: IT MANAGER
FAVOURITE GAMES: CHOLO, BRUCE LEE OR IMPOSSIBLE MISSION
FIRST REMAKE: JETPAC ON THE PC
LIKES: THE FRIENDLINESS OF THE RETRO COMMUNITY

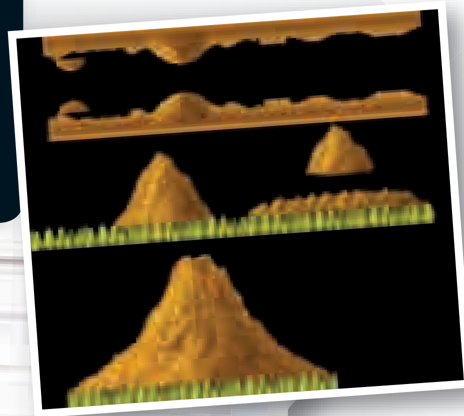
IAME: ANDY HEWITT
JOB: WEB DEVELOPER, TEAM LEADER
FAVOURITE GAMES: NEMESIS, STORMBRINGER, ELITE AND MANY MORE!
FIRST REMAKE: BOULDERDASH CALLED THE ROCKFORD FILES
LIKES: CALL OF DUTY 2, OUTRUN 2006 AND GENERAL NINTENDO GAMES



Tue 6th June

Finished all the large mountains now. The biggest one, which appears mid-way through the first level, proved to be the hardest, simply because of a larger area to draw the detail in.

Fixed a collision map problem that made the missile and walkers that Stu has started to implement from being eaten up by the scenery. Started the turrets; first few frames have been animated.



» A few sections from the first level. It's going to be great when it's finished

Wed 7th June

Completed the turrets and re-coloured red for the special version that leaves a power-up energy orb. Also completed construction of level 1 in the map editor with all the new graphics. Stu's got the scrolling perfect in-game and seeing the level drift by is pretty amazing. Sometimes working on a 2D game can be more satisfying than 3D, especially so when dealing with a game I admire so much.





Thu 8th June

Bad news day today. Not only did I get some unpleasant news about my team's future at real work, but on the way in someone decided to use the rear of my car as a means of slowing down. It must be the curse of 06/06/06 a couple of days ago catching up with me.

No such troubles back in *Nemesis* where tonight has been fairly productive. Fixed some map data and also removed a nasty purple halo from around some objects where I'd brushed over the transparent colour. Time also to create the parallax background layer. We've decided to implement this as a full screen image rather than another tilemap layer. For level one I have decided to try to make it look like you are flying in a cave, while being conscious not to get carried away with detail that could distract the player or change the feel of this level too much. The nostalgic element is pretty important for me, so I don't want to ruin it.



» The first level is looking pretty sweet. Should have it finished soon

Sunday 11th June

Today I have mostly been watching the air show at RAF Costford. Brilliant day lots of old and new planes flying overhead, a bit of sunstroke and the usual queues to get in and out. So, while fired up decided to tackle one of the Bacterion's fighters. There's a special red version too. One of the big characters in the game is the end of level boss. Shoot the core becoming a theme in the series, decided to have a go at this graphic. It's absolutely huge (in comparison to the other sprites) and I've decided to leave it intact, just re-coloured and smoothed out appropriately at its new larger size. So far it's looking like this boss is getting some battle damage, just in the way the colours and smoothing process is going, so I'll keep that in.

» Konami did such a great job with the original boss that we barely have to touch it. Nice

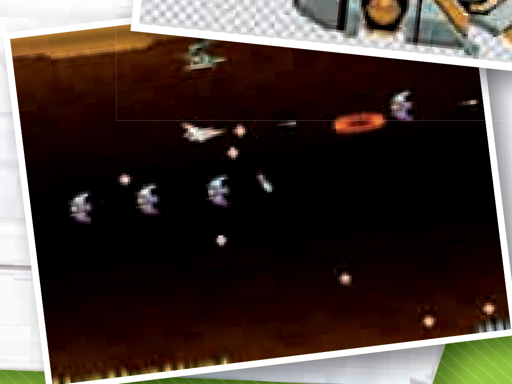


Monday 12th June

A fix for the tilemap, somehow we lost the floating mountain! Full virus scan revealed no Bacterions lurking on my PC, but unfortunately all my backups contained the old image. Still, it does not take long to redraw this mountain. Continued work on the end of level boss graphic. One of the many iconic images from the arcade, having a lot of fun drawing the boss. Also started on the walkers graphics.

Thursday 15th June

The boss graphic is almost done, just the core and shields to add to it (but these will be separate). Have made a mock up of its attack patterns in MMF to test some ideas. It's not going to just move up and down and shoot… that's a bit too easy!



» The first level in all its glory. Now on to the second stage…

Friday 16th June

Most of the coding for objects in level 1 is now complete. Some particle explosions and plenty going on. Starting to code the end of level boss now. Each stage will have a slight twist for the boss to make it a little more interesting and challenging.

RETRO SCENE

EVERY MONTH WE LOOK AT OUR FAVOURITE HOME-BREW TITLES, THIS MONTH IT'S STREETS OF RAGE AND GAMEX

Remake of the Month

retro GAMER SIZZLER

STREETS OF RAGE REMAKE

WE RETURN TO SEGA'S DANGEROUS STREETS

Streets Of Rage is undergoing an overhaul by Spanish home brew programmers, Bomber Games. The Bomber boys have taken all the best aspects of *SOR* and its two sequels. All the old characters are back, including a new version of Adam, who was replaced by his 12-year-old, rollerblading brother after the original outing. The graphics have mostly been extracted from the Mega Drive versions, though they appear to have been run through a Photoshop 'impressionist' filter to remove the pixelated edges. That said, a great deal of work has been done on the foreground and background art, as well as many of the character and prop sprites.

The music from the original games has also been updated and, while remaining distinctly recognisable, has gone techno, with modulating copper synths and bass lines pumping up the volume.

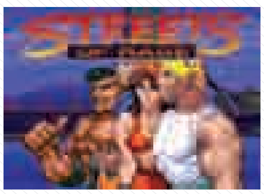
As yet, only a much revamped level one is available for download. Once inside the bar, the bare knuckle heroes now have the option of two different paths to the ferocious end-of-level bartender; the established route from *SORII*, or via an upstairs route through a blazing first floor.

With the addition of extra play modes and the reinstatement of the original *SOR*'s Police car fire bomb, we can only hope the Spanish team is inspired to rebuild *Streets Of Rage* in their entirety.

Overall a wonderful homage to a terrific franchise. Bomber Games, I salute you.

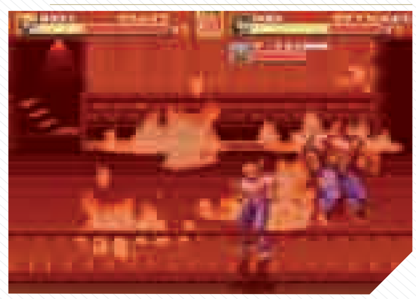
RATING NA

» The boys are back in town (I'm talking about Blaze, by the way).



- **FORMAT:** PC
- **RELEASE DATE:** OCT '05 – ONGOING
- **DEVELOPED BY:** BOMBER GAMES
- **LINK:** HTTP://WWW.BOMBERGAMES.CJB.NET/
- **REVIEWED BY:** SPANNER

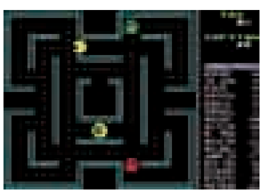




» **Above:** The familiar bar from *SORII* is due for a good trashing **Right:** The new alternative route to the end of the level

GAMEX

GREAT GAMES SADLY PUT IN THE STOCKS



» This first game, *Muncher*, gains you the 'capital' to play the other games

- **FORMAT:** ZX SPECTRUM 48K
- **RELEASE DATE:** 2006
- **DEVELOPED BY:** CRONOSOFT/ JONATHON CAULDWELL
- **LINK:** WWW.CRONOSOFT.CO.UK/
- **REVIEWED BY:** SPANNER

Here's a paradox: new retro remakes for the Spectrum 48K. And it's not the only dilemma posed by _GameX: The Game Exchange_, a new cassette-based title from classic system publishers, Cronosoft.

Its leading programmer, Jonathon Cauldwell, has succeeded once again in proving the capability of the Spectrum. These are, for the most part, re-imaginings of classic arcade titles such as *Pac-Man*, *Pang*, *Robotron* and a host of other retro titles. The long list of highly addictive quickies play with remarkable speed and dynamism. Of particular note is the *Pang* clone, *Bubbles*, which sustains dozens of bouncing bubbles flooding the screen without any real slow down.

Here's where the dilema kicks in, though. Although I love the mini games I can't get to grips with the 'stock exchange' system that determines the next game to be played.

Now, I was financially lobotomised at birth, so it could just be my complete inability to understand any economic system, but I'd be much happier if I could just choose the game I wanted to play from the list. Anyway, see if you can understand it.

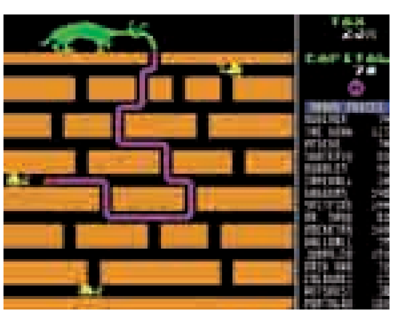
The first game, a terrific *Pac-Man* clone, earns you capital. Once the screen is clear, you are asked to buy shares in the other games. The price of those shares can go up or down, from which you collect dividends. If a dividend is payable, you must play the game you invested in. A panel on the right shows you the fluctuating status of the other game's shares.

Maybe you get it, but I find it bewildering. I guess the collection is under the umbrella of a stock market simulator, which, if it's your thing, will be a brilliant new take on the genre. If it's not, it gets on your tits a bit.

Still, the sub-games are so good that had this been released in 1984, you'd never have heard of Commodore. And it's only £2.99, so don't be a tight arse.

Overall 16 utterly fantastic games, hampered by an annoying stock exchange sim.

RATING 87%



» *Anteater* is a fantastic game, even if it looks a bit dodgy



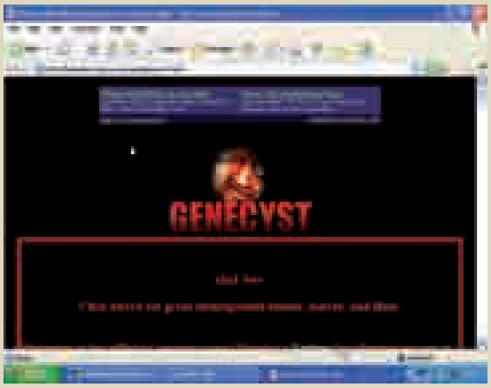
» I'd pay good money for anything that featured a pig on a skateboard, and *GameX* certainly delivers on that

EMULATE THIS

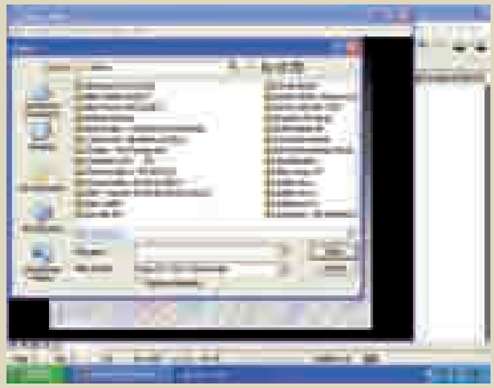
EVERY MONTH RETRO GAMER WILL BE GIVING YOU A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO THE WORLD OF EMULATION. TO TIE IN WITH OUR FEATURED MACHINE, THIS MONTH WE'LL BE LOOKING AT SEGA'S MEGA DRIVE.

Genecyst

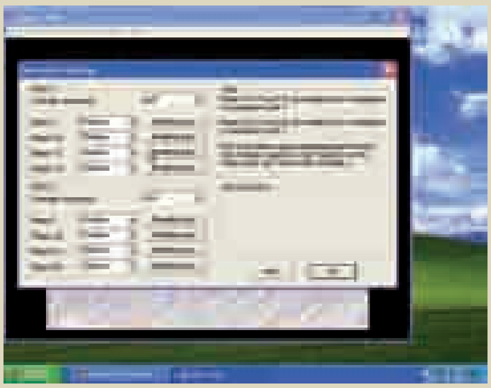
Here's the opportunity to use an emulator that's better than its source material. How is it better? Well PAL gamers can now play the games at 60hz, the speed the games were designed for; all that UK censorship is now history.



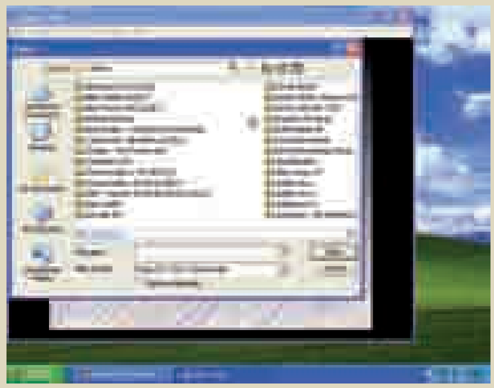
STEP ONE Head over to http://bloodlust.zophar.net/gen/genecyst.html and have a look at the history of the emulator. The author has marked the software as finished so there will be no more official updates. While there are plenty of Sega emulators freely available on the Internet, this is far and away the best Mega Drive emulator. Once you have read up on the background skip over to www.Romantion.net or equivalent videogame history provider and download the latest version.



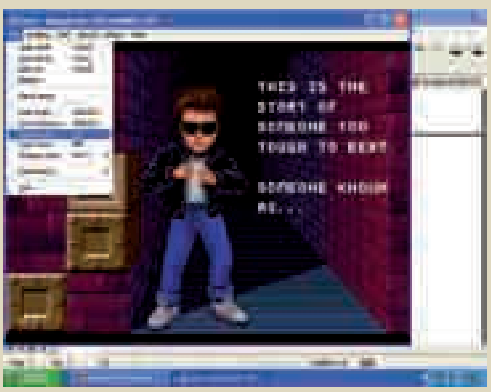
STEP 2 Create a new file in your computer's My Documents folder and extract the newly downloaded zipped file into it. Create a new ROM file in this new folder and move any ROMS that you have, and are entitled to play, into it, in zipped format. Double click on the Gens icon and the emulator will load automatically. Once loaded go straight to the file option, then open ROMS, locate your ROM folder and exit. Genecyst is quite old code and as such isn't optimised for new computers, so it's best to restart between operations.



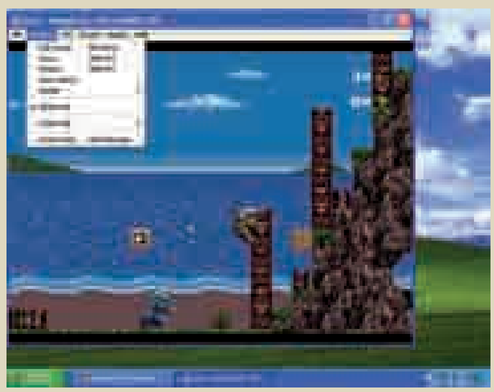
STEP 3 Load the emulator once more and go to the Option tab, within this is an option to configure a joypad or your controller of choice. Choose between a 3 and 6 button configuration, then click the redefine keys button, follow the onscreen prompt until you're happy with the configuration. You can now save this set up. Go to the Option tab again and at the bottom is the Save Config As option. You need to reload this set up each time you run the emulator. Load is found directly above save in the Options menu.



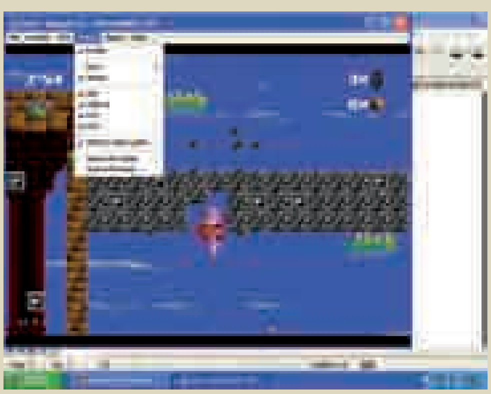
STEP 4 Go to the file option and click on open ROM. Highlight the game that you want to play and double click, the game will auto load and that's it. If the game doesn't run properly or seems too fast or slow, head to the CPU Option, then highlight country, this gives you the option to select the various regions that Mega Drive software was distributed in; if you are unsure of a game's origins, just highlight the auto detect option – only rarely does the emulator misinterpret the correct region.



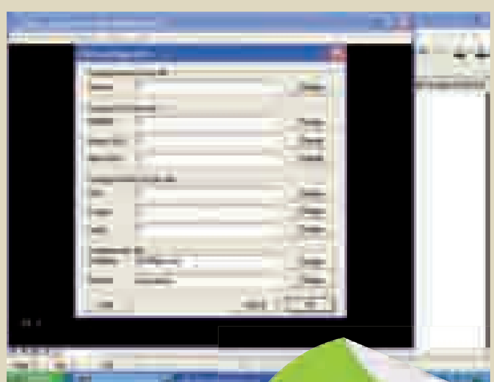
STEP 5 Once in game Genecyst provides options that its inspiration didn't, namely the ability to save games throughout via quick save. A quick press of F5 will provide a quick save; there are ten slots available, Shift and F5 allows you to name the save game, handy for many of the bigger games, especially the Mega Drive's often over-looked RPG heritage. F8 allows you to load the last quick saved game while Shift and F8 allow you to find a game save that you have named. F6 and F7 toggle up and down through the ten save slots.



STEP 6 The graphic options auto detect around the installed graphics card. Lower spec computers will give a much better display through the video stretch option; just click to activate. The emulator will stretch the display to make it as large as possible on the hardware that is running the emulation without reducing quality. Colour Adjust controls the brightness of display. Also the Graphics Option allows a Render Control (set to double for Mega Drive) used mainly for 32x emulation, a Sprite limiter (leave checked) and a Frame Skip Option – set this to auto as it's for 32X.



STEP 7 The sound options are quite straightforward. Enable the sound by checking the box. The sample rate again covers three Sega systems, the MD sampled sound at 22050 so check that option. Check the Stereo option according to the computers output. Then follows a list of sound chips – turn them all on, apart from the Yamaha and Z80 chip the others are negated with Mega Drive emulation, but if they are turned off the emulator tends to slow down as it has to think on the fly how to process the sound that is being generated.



STEP 8 Step 8 and we're all done. Darran's not looking so I'll quickly cover the Mega CD while we're here as well. Download the 3 MCD bios files. Go to Options then Bios/Misc files. Attach the relevant bios to each of three MCD slots. Insert a disk into your computers CD drive, go to the File option and click on the Boot CD option. You can change the drive's speed through the Option menu if there are loading difficulties. Set Sega CD SRAM size to 64. This controls back up information and *Silpheed* shall be yours again.

Note: Genecyst may not be available for Macintosh owners, but Mega Drive emulators are still available. Fans of Sega's 16-bit console should head on over to Richard Bannister's website at http://www.bannister.org/ and head over to his emulator section. Both Generator v0.4.1 and Genesis Plus v1.2.7 are both very good and accurately emulate Sega's machine. Now all you have to do is make a choice.

IN THE CHAIR WITH…
He's the grandfather of videogames, but is hardly ever credited for it. Retro Gamer discovers why everyone seems to have forgotten about Ralph H. Baer



THE DEFINITIVE...
Load Runner: Fed up with flying through space and driving sleek Ferraris, Stuart Campbell tries his hand at a little treasure hunting

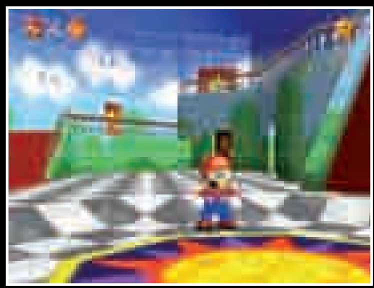


DEVELOPER LOOKBACK



The second half of our exhaustive LucasArts features looks at its success with the adventure genre and a little franchise called *Star Wars*…

THE MAKING OF…
Mario's first, and easily greatest 3D adventure is now 10 years old, so what better time than to find out how it all began?



THE MAKING OF…
Retro Gamer manages to strap Jez San into a nearby Arwing and gets him to spill all of *Starfox*'s SuperFX secrets







RETROINSPECTION
With Nintendo's 64-bit console recently celebrating its tenth birthday, we felt it was time to uncover its creation



COMPANY PROFILE

From grumpy cavemen to the feisty Lara Croft. Developers of Core Design look back over 18 years in the industry

AND THE REST…

- Retro Rated
- 80s A – Z
- Back To The 80s
- Classic Game
- High Score
- And much, much more

retro GAMER BREATHING NEW LIFE INTO CLASSIC GAMES

LOAD 28

NEXT ISSUE

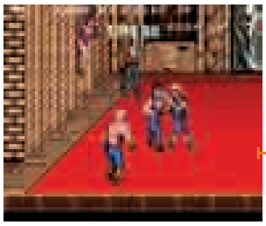
ON SALE 17 AUGUST 2006

END/GAME



DOUBLE DRAGON

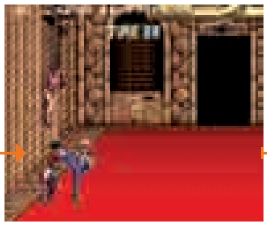
After travelling through filthy back alleys, abandoned warehouses and spooky forests, the Lee brothers finally approach the hideout of Big Boss Willy, leader of the vicious Black Warriors. It's fight time.



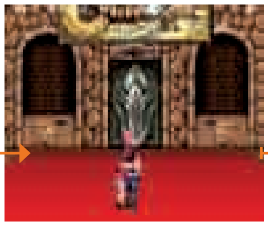
SCREEN 1
The two brothers finally reach the inner sanctum of Willy's opulant lair and immediately go to work on his henchmen. Marian may be trussed up like a Christmas turkey but she still manages to look like she's been hanging out all night on a street corner. The dirty little harlot.



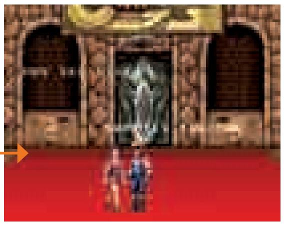
SCREEN 2
With the lesser minions all defeated Willy decides to join in the ruckus and brings an unfair weapon to the party – a bloody huge machine gun. The Lee brothers suddenly realise that even with all their kung fu training they don't actually possess the skill to dodge bullets. Doh!



SCREEN 3
With the enemy finally vanquished both boys stride towards the still strung up Marian. Despite looking like a lady of the night, Marian reveals that she's not interested in a three-way, so the two brothers must fight for her love. (Note, she doesn't actually say that, we've just made it up).



SCREEN 4
After a huge slugfest that would make the apelike Mitchell brothers proud, Billy Lee finally manages to best his elder sibling and eagerly awaits his prize (sorry, woman). Miraculously escaping from her bonds, the sultry minx plants a smacker on her hero whilst showing off a bit of knicker. Filth.



SCREEN 5
Ah, look at that. The two lovebirds are holding hands and can look forward to a lifetime of getting old together. Well they could do if the unfortunate lass didn't go and get herself shot at the beginning of the sequel. Oh well…At least it gives us another reason to go out and kick arse again.